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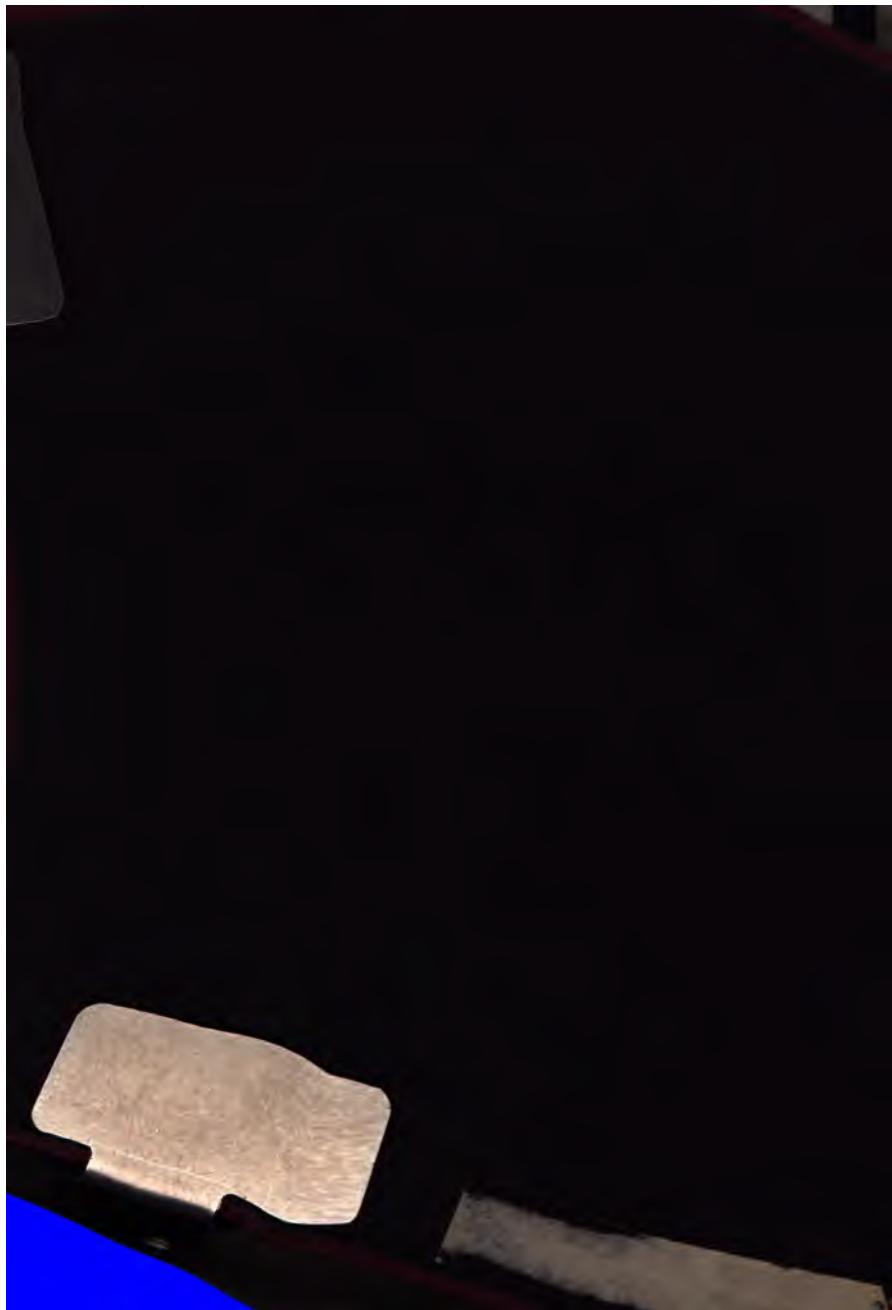
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# P O E M S

By V.

(*MRS. ARCHER CLIVE*)







# P O E M S

'Of IX Poems by V. we emphatically say, in old Greek,  
βαῖδ μὲν ἀλλὰ 'ΡΟΛΑ. It is an Ennead to which every Muse may  
have contributed her Ninth. The Stanzas printed by us in Italics  
are, in our judgment, worthy of any one of our greatest poets in his  
happiest moments.'

THE QUARTERLY REVIEW, September 1840.

# P O E M S

BY

V. (MRS ARCHER CLIVE)

AUTHOR OF 'PAUL FERROLL'

*INCLUDING THE IX POEMS*

NEW EDITION

LONDON

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

AND NEW YORK : 15 EAST 16<sup>th</sup> STREET

1890

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### *NOTE*

V. (Mrs. ARCHER CLIVE) was daughter and coheiress of Mr. Meysey Wigley, of Shakenhurst, Worcestershire. She was born 1801, and married 1840 the Rev. Archer Clive, Rector of Solihull, Warwickshire, son of Mr. Bolton Clive, of Whitfield, Herefordshire.

Mrs. Archer Clive, from a severe illness when she was three years old, was lame, and though her strong mind and high spirit carried her happily through childhood and early life, as she grew up she felt sharply the loss of all the active pleasures enjoyed by others. She possessed great talents, and has been distinguished as a writer in prose and verse.

The ‘Poems by V.’ have been praised by Dugald Stewart, by Lockhart, by Mr. Gladstone, who says of them : ‘They form a small book which has the life and soul of a great book.’ See also ‘Quarterly Review,’ No. 66, 1840. Her novel, ‘Paul Ferroll,’ has a world-wide renown. Her privations added strength to her character, and her power of will overcame the difficulties consequent on her infirmity ; nevertheless, the touching poem in ‘Paul Ferroll’ shows how deeply she felt her privations

—as deeply as uncomplainingly. Her social qualities and great powers of sympathy with others were known and appreciated by a large circle of friends. She died in 1873, from the result of an accident.

This new edition of her poems is published at the request of many friends. It contains a reprint of the previous ones, and a few short poems not previously published. It is dedicated to her memory by her daughter,

ALICE GREATHEID.

WHITFIELD : Oct. 1890.

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### *STARLIGHT*

DARKLING, methinks, the path of life is grown,  
And Solitude and Sorrow close around ;  
My fellow-trav'lers one by one are gone,  
Their home is reach'd, but mine must still be  
found.  
The sun that set as the last bow'd his head  
To cross the threshold of his resting place,  
Has left the world devoid of all that made  
Its business, pleasure, happiness, and grace.  
But I have still the desert path to trace ;  
Not with the day has my day's work an end ;  
And winds and shadows through the cold air chase,  
And earth looks dark where walk'd we friend  
with friend.  
And yet thus wilder'd, not without a guide,  
I wander on amid the shades of night ;  
My home-fires gleam, methinks, and round them glide  
My friends at peace, far off, but still in sight ;

For through the closing gloom, mine eyesight goes  
Further in heav'n than when the day was bright ;  
And there as Earth still dark and darker grows,  
Shines out for every shade a world of light.

1828.

*AT LLYNCWMSTRAETHY*

As ONE, whose country is distraught with war,  
Where each must guard his own with watchful  
hand,

Roams at the evening hour along the shore,  
And fain would seek beyond a calmer land ;

So I, perplexed on life's tumultuous way,  
Where evil pow'rs too oft my soul enslave,  
Along thy ocean, Death, all pensive stray,  
And think of shores thy further billows lave.

And glad were I to hear the boatman's cry,  
Which to his shadowy bark my steps should call,  
To woe and weakness heave my latest sigh,  
And cease to combat where so oft I fall.

Or happier, when some victory cheer'd my breast,  
That hour to quit the anxious field would choose  
And seek th' eternal seal on virtue's rest,  
Oft won, oft lost, and oh, too dear to lose !

*THE GRAVE*

I STOOD within the grave's o'ershadowing vault ;  
Gloomy and damp it stretch'd its vast domain ;  
Shades were its boundary ; for my strained eye  
    sought  
For other limit to its width in vain.

Faint from the entrance came a daylight ray,  
And distant sound of living men and things ;  
This, in th' encount'ring darkness pass'd away,  
    That, took the tone in which a mourner sings.

I lit a torch at a sepulchral lamp,  
Which shot a thread of light amid the gloom ;  
And feebly burning 'gainst the rolling damp,  
    I bore it through the regions of the tomb.

Around me stretch'd the slumbers of the dead,  
Whereof the silence ach'd upon mine ear ;  
More and more noiseless did I make my tread,  
    And yet its echoes chill'd my heart with fear.

The former men of every age and place,  
From all their wanderings gather'd, round me  
lay ;  
The dust of wither'd Empires did I trace,  
And stood 'mid generations pass'd away.

I saw whole cities, that in flood or fire  
Or famine or the plague, gave up their breath ;  
Whole armies whom a day beheld expire,  
By thousands swept into the arms of Death.

I saw the old world's white and wave-swept bones,  
A giant heap of creatures that had been ;  
Far and confus'd the broken skeletons  
Lay strewn beyond mine eye's remotest ken.

Death's various shrines—the urn, the stone, the  
lamp—  
Were scatter'd round, confus'd, amid the dead ;  
Symbols and types were mould'ring in the damp,  
Their shapes were waning, and their meaning  
fled.

Unspoken tongues, perchance in praise or woe,  
Were character'd on tablets Time had swept ;  
And deep were half their letters hid below,  
The thick small dust of those they once had wept.

No hand was here to wipe the dust away ;  
No reader of the writing trac'd beneath ;  
No spirit sitting by its form of clay ;  
No sigh nor sound from all the heaps of death.

One place alone had ceas'd to hold its prey ;  
A form had press'd it and was there no more ;  
The garments of the grave beside it lay,  
Where once they wrapp'd him on the rocky floor.

He only with returning footsteps broke  
Th' eternal calm wherewith the tomb was bound ;  
Among the sleeping dead alone He woke,  
And bless'd with outstretch'd hands the host  
around.

Well is it that such blessing hovers here,  
To soothe each sad survivor of the throng  
Who haunt the portals of the solemn sphere,  
And pour their woe the loaded air along.

They to the verge have follow'd what they love,  
And on th' insuperable threshold stand ;  
With cherish'd names its speechless calm reprove,  
And stretch in the abyss their ungrasp'd hand.

But vainly there the mourners seek relief  
From silenc'd voice and shapes Decay has swept,  
Till Death himself shall medicine their grief,  
Closing their eyes by those o'er whom they wept.

All that have died, the earth's whole race, repose  
Where Death collects his treasures, heap on heap ;  
O'er each one's busy day the night shades close,  
Its actors, sufferers, schools, kings, armies—sleep.

*YOUTH TOOK ONE SUMMER DAY  
HIS LYRE*

YOUTH took one summer day his lyre,  
And idly struck each golden wire ;  
Just as fancy bade him play  
Rose and sank the flowing lay ;  
Time and place he car'd not for,  
Yet his wand'ring hand had more  
That music of her votary asks  
Than the student's artful tasks.  
Sweet notes came out, and hung around  
Like a cloud of precious sound,  
Blending frolic tones, whose mirth  
Seem'd all that there is gay on earth  
With some which e'en the heart would melt  
Of those who fear'd, or lov'd, or felt.  
While thus he play'd, a form pass'd by,  
With aiding staff, and calm, cold eye ;

And stopp'd to hear his fingers bring  
Such music from his careless string.  
'Gray Age,' cried Youth, and smil'd, and stay'd  
The hand that on the lyre was laid,  
'Delayest thou to hear one twine  
Such an idle tune as mine ?'  
'Aye, fair Youth,' replied the sage,  
    'Many a fond ear there may be,  
But be sure there's none like Age,  
    Kind, and fond, and friend to thee.'  
'Nay, dost thou say so?' Youth replied,  
    'Then shall a worthier strain be tried ;  
I'll give my wandering notes a rule,  
    And tame my idle melody ;  
My musings what grave theme shall school ?  
    Kind, gray Age, I'll sing of thee.'  
He changed his key ; a graver one,  
    A slower time was now begun,  
Yet ever through the measure press'd  
    The accents of his frolic breast,  
And though the theme was Age, in sooth,  
    The singer and the song were Youth.  
'Thou anch'rest in the port of life,  
    The storm is brav'd, the sea behind ;

And rescu'd from its oft-prov'd strife,  
List'nest the raging of the wind.  
I have loos'd my summer bark ;  
Sky, and sea, and earth look fair ;  
Yet they say 'twill all be dark,  
Ere I too am anchor'd there.  
Is it so ? Within my breast  
There's such a flood and pulse of glee,  
That let Misfortune do her best,  
Methinks there must be joy for me.  
But thou through joy and grief hast mov'd,—  
What I am proving thou hast prov'd.  
Hope says to me, the storms that low'r  
Will break before my bright sun's pow'r ;  
Or if I dread to meet the gloom,  
She tells me it will never come.  
*Thou* needest not Hope's guiding eye,  
For come what will thy strength is ready :  
My spread sail trusts the summer sky,  
But thine is furl'd, thy anchor steady.  
Oh Age ! thou hast forgot how sweet  
'Tis to believe all things are true ;  
To think each wish its aim will meet,  
And mid-day keep morn's lovely hue.

Yet know I thou wouldest not resume,  
E'en if thou couldst, that feeling's bloom :  
No, Age, again thou wouldest not be  
Such a light, wild thing as me.  
Full many a deep enjoyment cheers  
The gather'd number of thy years ;  
Good deeds around thee shed a light,  
And spirit strengthen'd in the fight ;  
And calm, wide views of things that seem  
To me like some mysterious dream.  
Then, too, thy lighted hearth around  
Are steady friends by prov'd ties bound,  
And all that love thee now must be  
Still loved through wide eternity.  
But oh ! there's many a broken tie  
    Will mark my oft-united way ;  
I see full many a changing eye,  
    And I—I love as light as they.

' But Age ! *he* speaks no truth who says  
That mine are all life's sunny rays ;  
Thou its high mountains steep upon,  
Above the clime of flowers art gone,

Yet day-beams gild that head of thine,  
That reach not these brown locks of mine ;  
Beams of another day, that lie  
For me beyond full many a sorrow ;  
While thou above them stand'st on high,  
Beholding now the kindling morrow.  
Ah ! tell me of that new-born light,  
Those purer scenes that round thee rise,  
And how, if grief must cloud delight,  
To make it lead me to the skies.  
And I will breathe upon thine ear  
Tones of the wild unburthen'd glee,  
Which thou wilt love e'en yet to hear,  
For once such tones belong'd to thee :  
Yes, Age—the life of each we'll make  
The sweeter in that both partake.'

*WRITTEN IN ILLNESS*

My bark floats on the sea of death,  
    Of deep'ning waves the sport ;  
And dull disease, with heavy breath,  
    Impels me from the port.

Wide and unknown, the ocean surge  
    Outstretches to my ken ;  
Oh ! when I reach yon cloudy verge,  
    What sights will meet me then ?

Thee, native world, full well I know ;  
    And as thy shores recede,  
Mine eyes still wander from the prow,  
    Thy well-known forms to read.

There shines the light that first I knew,  
    The scenes that light displayed ;  
From which my soul the feelings drew,  
    Whereof itself was made.

There lie the shapes of joys and ills,  
Which mov'd erewhile my mind ;  
Like storms and suns upon the hills  
The trav'ller leaves behind.

But still receding, wasted on,  
All indistinct they grow ;  
The busy crowd that moves thereon  
To me is silent now ;

Its glittering ray mine eye escapes,  
The mists are round me furl'd ;  
Farewell, farewell, ye human shapes !  
Farewell my native world !

*FORMER HOME*

IN scenes untrod for many a year,  
I stand again, the long estranged ;  
And gazing round me, ponder here  
On all that has, and has not changed.

The casual visitor would see  
Naught altered in the aspects round ;  
But long familiar shapes to me  
Are missing, which I fain had found.

Still stands the rock, still runs the flood,  
Which not an eye could pass unmov'd ;  
The flow'ry bank, the fringing wood,  
Which e'en the passer mark'd and lov'd.

But when mine eye's delighted pride,  
Had dwelt the rock's high front upon,  
I sought upon its warmer side  
A vine we train'd—and that was gone.



And though awhile content I gazed  
Upon the river quick and fair,  
I sought, ere long, a seat we raised  
In childhood—but it was not there.

Stones lay around, I know not whether  
Its relics, or the winter's snow—  
And sitting where we sate together,  
Again I watch'd the torrent flow.

So whirl'd the waves that form'd it then,  
In foam around yon jutting stone ;  
So arrowy shot they down the glen,  
When here we pass'd the hours long flown.

There in the waters dipp'd the tree  
From which, the day I parted hence,  
I took a few green leaves, to be  
My solace still through time and chance.

Full many a spring the tree has shone  
In sunlight, air, and beauty here ;  
While I in cities gazed upon  
The wither'd leaves of that one year.



That year was fraught with heavy things,  
With deaths and partings, loss and pain ;  
And every object round me rings  
Its mournful epitaph again.

But most, those small familiar traits,  
Which only we have lov'd or known ;  
They flourish'd with our happier days—  
They wither'd because we were gone.

Their absence seems to speak of those  
Who're scatter'd far upon the earth,  
At whose young hands they once arose,  
Whose eyes gazed gleeful on their birth.

Those hands since then have grasp'd the brand,  
Those eyes in grief grown dim and hot,  
And wand'ring through a stranger's land,  
Oft yearn'd to this remember'd spot.

How changed are they !—how changed am I !  
The early spring of life is gone,  
Gone is each youthful vanity,—  
But what with years, oh what is won ?

I know not—but while standing now  
Where open'd first the heart of youth,  
I recollect how high would glow  
Its thoughts of Glory, Faith, and Truth—

How full it was of good and great,  
How true to heav'n, how warm to men.  
Alas ! I scarce forbear to hate  
The colder breast I bring again.

Hopes disappointed, sin, and time,  
Have moulded me since here I stood ;  
Ah ! paint old feelings, rock sublime !  
Speak life's fresh accents, mountain flood !

*HEART'S-EASE*

Or Heart-Ease, dost thou lie within that flower?  
 How shall I draw thee thence?—so much I need  
 The healing aid of thine enshrined power  
 To veil the past, and bid the time good speed !

I gather it—It withers on my breast ;  
 The heart's-ease dies when it is laid on mine ;  
 Methinks there is no shape by joy possess'd,  
 Would better fare than thou upon that shrine.

Take from me things gone by—oh ! change the past —  
 Renew the lost—restore me the decay'd ;—  
 Bring back the days whose tide has ebb'd so fast—  
 Give form again to the fantastic shade !

My hope, that never grew to certainty,—  
 My youth, that perish'd in its vain desire,—  
 My fond ambition, crush'd ere it could be  
 Aught save a self-consuming, wasted fire ;

Bring these anew, and set me once again  
In the delusion of life's infancy—  
I was not happy, but I knew not then  
That happy I was never doom'd to be.

Till these things are, and pow'rs divine descend,—  
Love, kindness, joy, and hope to gild my day,—  
In vain the emblem leaves towards me bend ;  
Thy spirit, Heart-Ease, is too far away !

*WRITTEN IN HEALTH*

FORBID, oh Fate ! forbid that I  
Should linger long before I die !  
Ah, let me not sad day by day  
Upon a dying bed decay,  
And learn to strain my lonely ear  
To catch a footstep drawing near,  
And oft my fainting eyelid raise,  
To see the friend who still delays.  
Let me not hear the world pass by,  
In all its splendour, love, and pride ;  
While I have nothing but to die,  
Whate'er my fellow-men betide.  
Nor let me come by sad degrees  
To feel each nobler feeling freeze ;  
And lose my love, my hope, my strength,—  
All, save the baser part of man,—  
Concentring every wish, at length,  
To die as slowly as I can.

Oh no ! I wish, I hope, I pray  
A better ending to my day.  
I fain would mount some headlong steed,  
And gallop o'er the cliff at speed ;  
Fall down a thousand fathoms there,  
And leave my life mid-way in air.  
I fain would meet in victory  
A wingèd ball aim'd full at me ;  
Shout, as it came, my wild war-cry,  
And, ere the sound was ended, die.  
I'd drink a deep delicious wine,  
With hasty poison mix'd therein,  
And with the sweetness on my breath,  
Die, ere I felt that it was death.  
I'd die in battle, love, or glee,  
With spirit wild, and body free,  
With all my wit, my soul, my heart,  
Burning away in every part,  
That so more meetly I might fly  
Into mine immortality ;  
Like comets when their race is run,  
That end by rushing on the sun.

. . . . .



*WRITTEN FOR A FRIEND WHO WISHED  
TO HAVE IN VERSE THE PERSIAN  
SENTENCE*

I came to the place of my birth and cried, ‘The friends of my youth, where are they?’ and an echo answered, ‘Where are they?’

I SOUGHT you, friends of youth, in sun and shade,  
By home and hearth,—but no! ye were not there;  
‘Where are ye gone, belov’d ones, where?’ I said;  
I listen’d, and an echo answer’d, ‘Where?’

Then silence fell around—upon a tomb  
I sate me down dismay’d at death, and wept;  
Over my senses fell a cloud of gloom,  
They sank before the myst’ry, and I slept.

I slept—and then before mine eyes there press’d  
Faces that show’d a bliss unknown before;  
The lov’d whom I in life had once possess’d,  
Came one by one, till all were there once more.

A light of nobler worlds was round their head;  
A glow of better actions made them fair;—  
'The dead are there,' triumphantly I said;  
Triumphantly the echo answered, 'There

*A LAST DAY*

LOWER, lower burn thou fire ;  
Lessen in the dark'ning room ;  
Sad I watch thy rays expire,  
Thou the last I light at home.

Oh my heart give way, and break ;  
Wander not an exile forth ;  
Die, ere thou thy home forsake,  
Be as cold as is thy hearth.

The hearth that glow'd for mine and me,  
Never more must I renew ;  
But a stranger it will be  
That must kindle it anew.

Lower, lower, burns the fire ;  
Pass'd the flame that leap'd and shone ;  
There, the ruddy gleams expire,  
There, the last weak spark is gone.

*I'M YOUNG, AND IT IS EARLY*

I'm young, and it is early to leave the world behind,  
But my eyes are waxing dim, and I feel I shall be  
blind ;

Last summer I could count yon laburnum's golden  
show'r,

But now I scarce can see there is a tree in flow'r.

I must put aside my wheel ; my work unfinish'd lies,  
Except the plaited straws which I plait without my  
eyes ;

I sit and feel them passing through my fingers all in  
gloom,

Long, long before the twilight has darken'd in the  
room.

When I am blind, my mother, oh do not me forsake ;  
I shall need a hand to guide me, a hand that I may  
take ;

The world with me went gaily, but now I lag behind  
The glad, the free, the busy—for I am going blind.



*AGE*

## I

WHILE the day descends to night,  
And the ev'ning air grows cold,  
Let me think of all the light  
I pass'd through ere I was old.  
That's a thought that must be laid  
Among the ashes of the dead ;  
Thought so bright in summer glow,  
Which is wintry wither'd now.

## II

Let me think on days of pleasure,  
Vig'rous limb, and causeless mirth ;  
Childish forms, my bosom's treasure,  
Friends and lovers round my hearth.  
Those are thoughts that must be laid  
Among the ashes of the dead ;  
Thoughts so bright in summer's glow,  
Which are wintry wither'd now.

*ADON*

I ROAM'D among the mountains, till mid-day  
Had brought me where a lonely valley lay,  
Deep hidden 'mid the labyrinth of hill  
Which rose above it, rocky, vast and still ;  
With ample meadow shelter'd from the breeze,  
And broad calm pool, and knolls of forest trees.  
Here, on a platform wide, a Temple stood ;  
The mead before—behind the shelt'ring wood ;  
And broad, brief steps their marble access lent,  
Up which I stole, and thro' the open portals went.  
In one unbroken hall it spread to sight,  
On pillars resting its gigantic height,  
While sculptur'd forms stood round of godlike frame,  
And ev'ry form familiar was to Fame.  
Fame, and the dead, were in the hall alone ;  
Clos'd tombs were rang'd beneath each sculptur'd  
stone—

---

Long lines of tombs of all who wrote or bled,  
Adorn'd with trophies of the famous dead ;  
For them the hall was rear'd, the roof was spread.  
No sound of life was there, but shapes and deeds,  
With silent language, filled the holy shades,  
And nothing mov'd within the ample span,  
Save with a noiseless footstep one old man.  
Awe-struck I stood, and gaz'd in nameless fear,  
Until he mark'd, and beckon'd to draw near.

He show'd me graven names whose sound was grown  
Through the wide world a spirit-stirring tone ;  
He show'd me sculptur'd forms, which bodied forth  
The mind's long pictur'd shapes of wit and worth,  
And some who one good deed alone had wrought,  
One act, one song, one sole but pregnant thought ;  
On all the ranks I gazed of good and brave,  
The ancient tomb-place, and the new-made grave.

• • • •  
'And whose is the tomb that is scarcely begun?  
Not the work of a day at its hollow is done ;  
At the end of the aisle they have found it a space,  
Where these monuments darken its humbly-set  
place ;

The good and the mighty together are laid,  
And it lies just beyond them, alone, in their shade.  
A sun's ray at morn, or a moonbeam by night,  
May steal through yon window and touch it with  
light ;  
But no warrior-banner can over it wave,  
No sculpture the form of the dweller recall,  
No fame-giving verses can hallow the grave,  
So humbly conceal'd in the nook of the wall.  
Tell me for whom are they making the tomb,  
And when to its breast will the tenant come  
home ?'  
'The tomb is for thee,' he replied, 'and thy race  
Runs the narrowing circle that ends in yon place ;  
Lightly thy heart in thy bosom may play,  
But the sickness that kills thee hath struck thee  
to-day.  
This day as thy step o'er the mountain-path came,  
A pang for an instant shot over thy frame ;  
Thou rememb'rest it not, for so slightly 'twas cast  
Thy way was not stopp'd, as it struck thee and  
pass'd ;  
But yet 'twas a pang with thy destiny rife,  
Even now it is doing its work on thy life.

*ADON*

Thou from thy wand'ring to-day wilt go back,  
When the close of the eventide summons thee  
home,  
With the purpose full oft to return on the track  
Where the torrent and mountain invite thee to  
roam ;  
But thy freedom is fetter'd ; thy wand'ring is o'er ;  
Thou shalt gaze from the valley, but never climb  
more.  
That pang shall possess thee with nameless decay,  
Gradually wasting thy vigour away ;  
From the forest, where yet for a while thou may'st  
tread,  
It shall limit thy walk to the southern stretch'd  
mead ;  
And then from the mead, with its wild waving bow'r's,  
To the one garden-path with its sun and its flow'r's.  
And last shalt thou measure thy sad chamber floor,  
And sink on thy couch whence thou risest no more.  
Write what thou wilt on the face of yon stone,  
It shall lie on thy grave when thy journey is done.'

Silent I took the pencil from his hand,  
And gaz'd upon him with a brief delay ;

His words came cold and quiet o'er my mind,  
Like a cave's shadow enter'd at mid-day.  
I did not speak, but turned me to the stone,  
And kneel'd to write, while the old man looked on.

**EPITAPH**

Adon is dead—from his place he is pass'd,  
Like the young mountain-ash on the lonely hill-side ;  
So remote when it liv'd were the blossoms it cast,  
That it wither'd unnotic'd, not miss'd when it died.

They've laid him, to sleep his death-slumber, beyond  
The tombs where earth's mighty ones rest in  
their state ;  
No place in the ranks of their glory he found ;  
Too untried to be good, too unknown to be great.

He has gazed, he has felt, he has kindled to fire,  
When Nature around him her magic would throng ;  
Scarce consciously then he has waken'd the lyre,  
And his fulness of soul has o'erflowed into song.



That ray of his thought still is shining through all  
The dust of the heart whence once issu'd its  
tide;  
Should it e'er on thine eye like a wand'ring light fall,  
Oh think upon Adon, who gave it and died.

*TO THE REA<sup>1</sup>*

I LOVED thee for thy river-beauty, Rea !

And many an hour comes back on me, when I  
 Gazed on thy motion, heard thee rushing by,  
 And felt and dream'd, and wish'd and hoped, by thee.

The wish, the dream, were destined to depart,  
 And hopes shone out an hour and were no more ;  
 Again I wou'd not bear the longing heart,  
 Which by thy devious bank, O Rea ! I bore.

Another scene, another home, have sent  
 Life's heav'n upon my scarce believing view ;  
 Beyond all hope, high e'en as wishes went,  
 The blessed now oft seems more good than true.

But gazing back in Mem'ry's peopled book,  
 I see those shadows pass again, which were  
 Truths, when I sate in youth beside the brook,  
 List'ning to all with open eye and ear.

<sup>1</sup> A little stream which rises in the Brown Clee-hills and falls into the Teme.

And some have taken form and hues anew  
While musing o'er the Past that haunted me  
Until to words the phantom-figures grew—  
And thus I tell thy long-pass'd tale, O Rea !

*THE RIVER REA*

WITHIN its circling shell the unseen fruit  
Grows sweet and spotless ; rough the outer coat,  
And coarse the rind that hides it from the sight,  
But all within is delicate and white.

So Mabel in the lowly cottage grew ;  
Coarse customs round, coarse garb, and lowly care,  
But fairy-framed in shape, and faint in hue,  
Too fair for those around to deem her fair.

They better lov'd the joyous colour'd face,  
And shape robust, and nature glad and strong ;  
But she was of a pliant natural grace,  
Soother of grief, and pardoner of wrong.

Expert her household hand, of blame afraid  
Silent she mov'd, and each command was done ;  
Grateful, believing, loving was the maid,  
And priz'd all worth—unconscious of her own.

Passing from childhood, she had shyly felt  
The morning ice-of-heart within her melt.

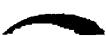
The youths around her various gifts possess'd,  
But one there was she lov'd of all the best.  
That one was raised above her humble sphere,  
And though he too was low, 'twas high to her ;  
Some acres his paternal homestead made ;  
His own were house and field and orchard-shade ;  
His garb was better than the utter poor,  
His time more leisure, and his food secure,  
And in *her* eyes the home he own'd was bless'd,  
Wherein to labour and to live were rest.  
But such things only set the jewel off,  
Whose native gifts were plentiful enough ;  
His agile form was shap'd in manly guise,  
And glad the spirit laughing in his eyes ;  
His cheek embrown'd, his smiling mouth and gay,  
His speech outbreaking, that enforced his sway,  
His reckless deeds, his dangers and escape,  
His gen'rous pity, and his sport-tried strength,  
The forms in which his wild exploits took shape,  
Had wrought, had warm'd, had ta'en her heart  
at length.  
And when she saw him now, or heard his name,  
Or when his distant accent o'er her came,

An unresisted blush would rise, and turn  
Her moonlight visage to a dawning morn.

He saw it, and in mirth at first he took  
The shy avoidance and the furtive look ;  
Then grew to see the kindling blush was fair,  
Then feigned some ill to ask her for her care,  
Some fabled thorn his hardened skin beneath,  
Which long she sought for with implicit faith ;  
Some atom, grieving much his hand-hid eye,  
'To search for which her face in his must pry ;  
And thoughts across his mind at times would come,  
How cheerful, neat, and safe with her, were home.

But diff'rent far such thoughts from those which  
pressed  
From the same source the maiden's humble breast ;  
To her, each service ask'd was honour done,  
Each service rendered him, was love begun ;  
And soon within her silent heart he grew  
The never absent image—never old nor new.

At this time warlike tidings came, which told  
How England needed pow'ful hands and bold,



And through the town the drum and the cockade  
Call'd the recruit his country's cause to aid.  
Mabel the summons heard, and thought alone  
Of the bold Reuben, 'Ah ! he'll go—is gone.'  
And ev'ry passer from the town that came,  
She feared among the rest would name his name.  
No inner call to join the war had he,  
Dearer his acres and his liberty ;  
But when he saw the silent girl afraid,  
(And e'en th' unworded look her fears betrayed),  
It was a sport he meant not for unkind  
To trouble more th' unquiet of her mind,  
Affright with battles her undoubting ear,  
And feign an unfelt purpose to be there.

One winter day it chanc'd that she had gone  
On some home-errand—and the bidding done  
Came as she went, like village maid, alone.  
By Reuben's door, perforce, she took her way,  
In her sole path the house and orchard lay ;  
And Reuben, lab'ring in his croft, waylaid  
And ran to startle the quick-stepping maid.  
'Nay, 'tis but I—feel not affright, nor feign ;  
Come in and rest you, then go home again.

You'll grieve me, Mabel, to my fond heart's core,  
If scornfully you thus pass by my door.'

But Mabel's untaught conscience whisper'd clear,  
Alone with him she must not enter there ;  
And she was strong the martyr's deed to do—  
Refuse her Reuben, and her own heart too.

Then feigning anger that he felt not, he  
Threw back her hand, and chang'd his tone of play ;

Pretending grief, yet smiling in his glee,

He gave her cruel words, and turn'd away,  
While she stood fast, afraid at what she heard,  
Yet felt there was a kindness in his word.

He watch'd in secret, laugh'd to see her wait,  
Perplex'd and sad, an instant at his gate,  
And move at last reluctantly away,  
Pond'ring the past of that eventful day.

Then putting by his spade he towardward went,  
To tell what chanc'd and share his merriment.

'What if I send her word her act unkind  
Has wrought a fury in my troubled mind,  
And forc'd upon the deed she fears, by her,  
I took the shilling and am gone to war ?  
Bear her these ribbons, say the word is spoken,  
And I to her have sent the warrior's token.

Ere she has wept an hour I'll come again,  
And win a kiss for bringing joy from pain.'  
Loudly applaud his comrades, and the jest  
Suits well the jocund coarseness of their breast ;  
Nor think they of the finer spirit's fire,  
Which glows in joy, but may in grief expire ;  
And one they send, to bear the fatal knot,  
As messenger of evil to the humble cot.

She heard and spoke not ; took the gift he sent ;  
Nor for a moment doubted what was told ;  
Beneath the weight her frightened spirit bent,  
Her white cheek whiten'd, and her heart grew  
cold,  
But not a tear reliev'd the burthen there ;  
And they for calmness took the maid's despair.  
'Nay, Reuben, be a soldier if you will,  
Mabel regards not, or your good or ill ;  
She took your token, and not e'en a word  
Of grief or kindness at her lips we heard ;  
You've deemed a conquest which was all untrue,  
And 'tis *her* turn to scorn and mock at you.'  
'The faithless maiden ! yet she does but feign—  
The longer shall she linger in her pain ;

I'll leave her doubtful till to-morrow's prime--  
Meanwhile let's crush a cup this Christmas time.'

But Mabel was as one who sees the cloud  
Spread over sunny skies a sudden shroud,  
Beholds the darkness drink each kindly ray,  
And storm and tempest quite blot out her way.  
'He dies—I've slain him ;' those were words that  
wrought  
Incessant pain in her bewildered thought,  
Kindling therein a false misleading flame,  
Like demon torch that leads to death or shame.  
And yet no outer change might one descry ;  
The same she was, e'en to her mother's eye.  
The patient poor so much of sorrow bear  
It is not hard to hide a double share.  
'Thou dost not eat—but there's enough to-night—  
Spare not the meat, we all of us have fed.'  
'I've eaten, mother.'—'Well, girl, all is right ;  
Thou'rt weary, and like me wert fain in bed.'  
And so ere long the household was at rest :  
The infant slumber'd on its mother's breast,  
The boys from toil gain'd deep oblivion there,  
The child from play—the mother from her care,

The father's hardships for the day were done,  
All slept who could, and all could sleep but one.  
She, too, upon her humble pallet lay,  
But thought boil'd up and chas'd all sleep away.  
' He dies—I've slain him ; ' never-ceasing, throng  
The frightful words bewild'ringly along,  
And sent such poison through her restless frame,  
The bed where she so well had slept became }  
A tort'ring rack—a martyr's couch of flame.  
She started up and threw the window wide,  
And stretch'd her in the moonlight bright outside.

Through frosted air, the lessen'd planet shone  
In cold blue skies, all brilliant and alone ;  
If stars there were, so bright the moonlight pour'd,  
They, as by other daylight, were obscur'd.  
Bound was the whiten'd world in icy band,  
The hoar-frost crisp o'er all the harden'd land,  
The powd'ring ice from ev'ry branch glanc'd bright,  
A steadfast frailty, an unearthly white ;  
A stillness which itself seem'd frost, where found  
A path from far away, each casual sound—  
The distant sheep whose sudden voice seem'd nigh,  
The clock which swung the hour upon the frosted sky.

The biting cold on Mabel's fever'd frame  
Like some stern kindness, salutary came ;  
It seem'd to call her from her restless bed,  
And promis'd coolness to her burning head.  
Silent she dress'd—no purpose had she then  
Except to wander through the winter glen ;  
And passing the familiar stair once more,  
Once more behind, she clos'd her father's door.  
She stood outside where not another cot  
Partook the solitude of that lone spot ;  
A giant tree above the cottage spread,  
Before it, downward tending, stretch'd a mead ;  
Behind, an orchard where a rill ran free,  
Which join'd, a little on, the river Rea.  
From pool to pool the river murmur'd flow'd  
Through shelt'ring banks and under fringing wood ;  
'Twixt winding hills it ran, and ev'ry turn  
Brought to its poppling course a slender burn.  
Rapid its current, and the middle stream  
Still broke in thousand parts the dancing beam ;  
But on its edge a band irregular  
Of growing ice threw out its crystals clear.  
Down to the water came she—nor, I ween,  
Reck'd of the frosted boughs or moonbeam's quiver ;

But led unconscious by th' unusual scene,  
And guided by the accents of the river.  
Nor paus'd she till all suddenly she stood  
Upon a bank that overlook'd the flood,  
And downward gazing, knew with sudden shock  
The blacken'd water from the blacker rock ;  
' How still, how cold,' she said, ' the waters sleep,  
How shame and grief would there be buried deep !  
There could I hide me from my guilt and pain,  
Forgetting him whom I have lov'd and slain.'  
She paus'd and gaz'd, no sudden purpose took,  
But stronger grew it with her steadfast look ;  
On her hot brain the very deed seem'd writ,  
And her sick reason's self commended it.  
The newly kindled thought o'er old thoughts spread,  
Patience and household neatness were not dead ;  
She laid aside the bonnet quaint and neat,  
Turn'd back the stockings from her maiden feet,  
Undid the lacings of her humble gown,  
And laid them folded as at bedtime down ;  
Stood in white garb upon the whiten'd spot,  
And on her bosom lay his ribbon knot ;  
The burning ribbons the last impulse gave,  
She grasp'd them—and plung'd headlong in the wave.

Alas ! for Mabel.—

When the winter sun  
Next day had half his shorten'd journey done,  
The body whence the gracious soul had fled  
Lay all compos'd upon the cottage bed.  
Her wet locks on the bolster spread—her hand  
Fast clenched upon the colour'd ribbon band ;  
Her eyes, which dying no kind hand had shut,  
Were open half—the lips were white and set ;  
Her cheek yet show'd the fever spot of ill,  
But now the fever'd brain and heart were still.

But all around was weeping—work and play  
Alike suspended on that mournful day ;  
The mother's sob, the father's hidden tear,  
The women wailing as they dress'd the bier.  
The judges of her death whose sentence gave  
Her maiden relics to an honour'd grave,  
All, pitying, mourn'd the deed that she had done,  
All for the maiden griev'd aloud save one.  
Reuben had forc'd his entrance to the room,  
And gaz'd upon her with suspended breath ;  
Then, some one charging him with Mabel's  
doom,

Show'd him the ribbon in her grasp of death.  
And he, as starts the wounded deer, upsprang  
As mute, as fleet, beneath the sudden pang ;  
And rushing headlong from the cottage door,  
Was in his home and village seen no more.

1855.

*I WATCHED THE HEAVENS*

## I

I WATCH'D the heav'ns above me, and a star  
    Appear'd before my meditative eyes ;  
I mark'd the solitary beam afar  
    Pursue its journey in th' eternal skies.  
Calm from its distant glory, came the rays  
    Through all of space between us, on my gaze ;  
No other sign of those who dwelt therein  
    Fell on my sense, except that beam serene ;  
And fancy, soothed beneath the streaming light,  
    Pursued the orb along its high career,  
And deem'd it some new world, all fresh and bright,  
    With its ten thousand hopes, and not one fear.

## II

There did I land, upborne on wondrous wing,  
    On whose strong pinion the freed spirit flies ;



And mark'd around in many a beauteous thing,  
How, like our earth, it might be paradise.  
Serene and sweet the lovely landscape lay  
Outstretch'd beneath a summer's glancing ray ;  
And from blue skies a fost'ring sun like ours,  
Swell'd in the fruits and glitter'd in the flow'rs.  
Above, the silent mountains stood on high,  
Their outline grav'd distinct along the sky ;  
And forests stretch'd their undulating wreath  
About the vales that smiling slept beneath ;  
While far away, the breath of fresh perfume  
! Pass'd on the breeze which rose from western caves,  
And o'er the glow of summer's form and bloom  
Calm ocean's voice came up from slowly moving  
waves.

## III

Man's mind, if tun'd harmonious to the scene,  
Might here have felt its glory all expand ;  
Reason, and joy, and feeling, would have been  
Call'd forth and echo'd in that lovely land.  
. Here dwelt that grandeur on the mountain's brow  
Which calls to life the bosom's gen'rous glow ;  
Here smiled that softness on the mirror lake  
From which our feelings holy calmness take ;

And breeze and bloom, and change of night and day,  
Held commune with the soul's more noble part ;  
And fain would lead it on its destin'd way,  
All dignified the mind, all calm and good the heart.

## IV

'O Thou, whose ample page, if read aright,  
Stirs the immortal in the mortal's breast,  
If here there dwell a race not fallen quite,  
They are already, or they may be, bless'd ;  
For thou hast lov'd this new-found globe to dress,  
And make it fit for Eden happiness ;  
And if its dwellers like itself be pure,  
Glory and peace will mantle o'er their doom ;  
Man here might see his promised hope secure—  
This is perchance the shore whose ocean is the  
tomb.'

## V

While thus I ponder'd, onward came a form,  
Unlike the dream which flatter'd Fancy's sight,  
Man's shape he wore, but some internal storm  
Defaced the image, and put out its light.  
His inward spirit seemed by thoughts o'er cast  
Whose shadow o'er his visage darkly pass'd,

And to his eye that lovely land was dim,  
Suggesting nought of peace or joy to him—  
He heard no accent in the wind and flood,  
    The landscape had no meanings for his eye,  
In vain before him in their joy they stood,  
    For joy's responding sources in his heart were dry.

## VI

'Being!—what art thou?' I exclaim'd, and gazed  
    In wonder on his stricken form and face;  
On me his haggard eyes he slowly raised,  
    And paused a few short moments in his place.  
I know not what of deadly pain there came  
    In gradual current through his shaken frame,  
But while he mark'd me, old Remembrance seem'd  
    To pass before him with its phantom crew,  
Like one who fainting on the rack has dream'd  
    Of childhood's scenes, which crowd his thoughts  
        anew,  
Forgot through guilty years—but oh, how dear and  
        true!

## VII

'And what art thou?' he answer'd me. 'Canst thou,  
    A mortal, stand still mortal on this shore?

Back, back to earth, man's happiest dream to know—  
Dream thou shalt die—Death comes to us no  
more !'  
With that he toss'd his weary arms on high,  
And look'd despairing at the sunny sky,  
While cold dews rose upon his ashy brow,  
Wrung fiercely from his inward agony,  
As though he felt the curse upon him now,  
The everlasting doom, the fix'd command, to Be.

## VIII

'Death comes not here ?' I cried ; 'O, spirit, say,  
Why dwells then on thy face that print of pain?  
This land seems one where joyful souls might stray,  
Most bless'd in that they lose it not again.'  
Darkly he answer'd—' Ay, if place could make  
That joy wherein the soul aspires to dwell ;  
The land, the land, perchance, such thoughts may  
wake—  
Ay, all around is heaven, but here within is hell.'

## IX

So saying, on the ground his form he threw,  
And gnash'd the herbs around him in his woe,

Then his clench'd hand towards the skies he threw,  
And gibber'd words like hate, but short and low,  
Forced through closed teeth, as though his inward  
    pain  
Sought something to accuse, and sought in vain.  
At length his eyes upon my face he turn'd,  
Where fire, like tomb-lamps lit by sorrow, burn'd,  
And bade me forward—‘Go, and see beyond,  
    The fallen spirits, and the scene they suit—  
God to their guidance leaves the outcast land,  
Sin works its will uncheck'd—go see its gracious  
    fruit ! ’

## x

I wander'd onward, stricken with his word,  
And look'd for some new form as dread as this ;  
But yet no sound of voice or step was heard,  
    And nature smiled in her untroubled bliss.  
Deep, quiet vistas of green wood uprose,  
And flow'rs beneath illumined their repose ;  
Where sunbeams piercing through the quiv'ring  
    shade  
Shot changeful brightness up the summer glade.  
At length, where hung above the flood a tree,  
    I saw a shape sit tranquil as the scene ;

And deem'd the sentence not for him, and he  
Was there, rejoicing and rejoiced by Nature's mien.

## XI

But as I gazed, a horror o'er me came,  
Like one who enters in a gloomy place,  
And there, with doubtful eyes and startled frame  
Sees from the darkness grow a form and face.  
Chang'd was that face, and dim the look it wore,  
Yet still 'twas one that I had known of yore ;  
But, oh ! how alter'd from that happier day,  
When mind shone through it with its fiery ray !  
Keen, joyous, then—and in those hours of earth,  
Whate'er he touch'd became a brighter thing ;  
E'en vice, when he would wreath it in his mirth,  
Grew fair beneath the flowers which o'er it he  
would fling.

## XII

Stilly he sat, but on his hueless cheek  
'Twas no Elysian peace that fix'd its reign,  
But brooding stillness, whose dark shadows speak  
Of reason lost in a benighted brain.  
And that quick eye, which, glitt'ring once with wit,  
Mark'd and adorn'd each form that courted it,



Now heavily was fix'd on one lone spot,  
And even there beheld, but mark'd it not.  
His lips had sunk asunder, and the smile  
That came like lightning seemed extinct for ever ;  
His slacken'd brow was blank of light the while,  
Where glow'd his genius once, as though to perish  
never.

## xiii

I call'd him by his name—he did not mark ;  
His fame, it seem'd forgotten in his doom ;  
Like the silk pennon on a sinking bark,  
Or wither'd flow'rs upon a last-year's tomb.  
Then from my mem'ry, words of his I brought,  
Wherein he once had cloth'd a splendid thought,  
And he look'd up as though the pausing dart  
Which press'd before, now enter'd in his heart.  
'Gone—gone !' he cried, and one expiring ray  
Of mind return'd to show how thick the night,  
Then vanish'd in the gath'ring clouds away,  
Like storms dispers'd a moment ere they quench the  
light.

## xiv

'Art thou so fallen ?' I exclaim'd—'What, thou ?  
Earth-worshipp'd man, our glory, once, and grace,—

Where is the wreath which twines thy statue's brow ?  
 Where is th' Elysium which we deem'd thy place ?'  
 'Thou speakest language of a world gone by,'  
 Slowly he answered—' Lowest, last am I.'  
 And while he spoke, I thought of time behind,  
 When once beside an idiot's seat he stood,  
 Mocking the dull face, in his pride of mind—  
 Then, how unlike his own ! how near his present  
 mood !

## xv

' Yet, once,' I answer'd, ' words were not so fleet,  
 But thou hadst caught their sense before 'twas said ;  
 Things dark to others thou wouldest half-way meet,  
 And turn them all to daylight 'mid the shade.'  
 ' Am I as then ? ' he answer'd. ' Then I was  
 Happy.' He spoke, and dismal was the pause ;  
 Then round he gazed on the delicious land,—  
 But to his eyes, alas ! 'twas dull and void,—  
 And murmur'd, stretching forth each empty hand,  
 ' *I feel* existence only, which I once enjoy'd.'

## xvi

' This is thy penance, then,' I cried ; but he,  
 In such dull accents as before, replied—

'Ay, call it penance, if such name may be,  
To things by nature join'd in one, applied.  
Ay, penance, for I might have been as high  
As Joy can lead a dweller of the sky,  
If passions brought from earth had not decay'd  
This subtle frame, for joy and virtue made ;  
But they have bow'd and rent it, till behold  
The hopeless, helpless wretch that I am grown ;  
Earth was the place to check them or unfold,—  
Cruel as true thy word, my penance is my own.'

## xvii

Pitying I heard ; but while mine ear I bent,  
Arose a cry that spoke th' extreme of ill,  
Prolong'd by passion when the breath was spent,  
Renew'd again ere one might say 'tis still.  
And, oh, what mingled dread was surging thence !  
Fear, fury's yell, and agony intense ;  
And of some deed, some sight,—the story told,  
I dared not think on, yet must fain behold ;  
And, rushing headlong toward the sounding place,  
Through bush and brake I strove to force my way,  
As one who would behold a murder'd face  
Tears off the pall in haste, too fearful to delay.

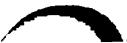
## XVIII

And there—oh Heav'n! oh Heav'n!—that fearful  
sight!

Man, what a fiend, when turned to ill, art thou!  
What aspects human eyes and thoughts to blight,  
Tortured and torturer, met my glances now!  
For both uprose before me—both, too, wore  
Man's form, and yet a human form no more;  
But shap'd by inner thoughts, till they were grown  
Things that the mortal eye ne'er look'd upon.  
One fasten'd to a stake was writhing there,  
With hell's own aspect on his form and face,  
And round, th' inflictors stood, on whom Despair  
Was written with another, but an equal trace.

## XIX

Where are the burning words that paint the pains  
By spirits on their fellow-spirits wrought?  
Things which earth's tyrant racks and dungeon chains  
But shadow forth, as speech interprets thought.  
Not human pain was there, for that can slay,  
And from the man divide the suffering clay;



But pangs that press'd on naked mind their smart,  
And lived with life in each immortal part ;  
Such as inflame on earth the torturer's *will*--  
    The eager will which leaves his power behind ;  
The will, the power, in hell are present still,  
    And that wherewith, whereon, they work is Mind.

## xx

In vain I strive to paint the how--the why ;  
    Earth has no words to fix th' unearthly thing--  
The outer signs they wrung from Misery,  
    The tone, the look, the act, are all I sing ;  
And, oh ! how howl'd upon the ether's sleep  
    The load of shrieks from that unceasing lip ;  
How flash'd the light that elsewhere slept serene,  
    In horrid lightning from that frantic mien !  
Passion's extremest utt'rance, mingled wild  
    With pain, a load of wrong and rage to wreak ;  
At times, the inflicting host his voice revil'd  
    In words which might have ruin'd worlds to  
        speak--  
At times himself he wail'd in that blaspheming  
        shriek.

## xxi

Around, not less demoniac, show'd the crew,  
Tossing and wild, like some tempestuous wave ;  
Each with fresh torture heap'd his pain anew,  
And bitter speech increased the pang they gave.  
Unknown to them satiety of pain—  
Unknown Remorse, which, waking not in vain  
On earth, amid her worst and fiercest band,  
Holds from the last excess the shrinking hand ;  
But these no sympathising feelings knew,  
By which man makes the cause of man his own ;  
No saving influence the hand withdrew,  
Where all alike had pow'r, and pity dwelt with  
none.

## xxii

All who from him had suffer'd wrong were there,  
Whose souls, debas'd, for vengeance thirsted still ;  
All he compell'd on earth his yoke to bear,  
By fortune slaves, but tyrants by their will.  
Nor were earth's debts alone to be defray'd—  
He lived in hell the tyrant he had died ;  
And spirits here the recent wrong repaid  
With eager haste upon his conquer'd head.



'Remember earth—remember hell!' they said ;  
    'This, for the long pass'd, long remember'd wrong ;  
And this, for yesterday's still burning deed,  
    For which we thank our fate thou hast not waited  
        long.'

## xxiii

With wild demoniac laugh they urged their glee,  
    For frightened look'd they with their own success,  
Like one who, murd'ring his worst enemy,  
    Grows mad with his loud cry and struggling face.  
And he, their victim, shriek'd, till all among  
    The vales and hills one voice of torment rung ;  
And ghastly shapes came forth in living swarms,  
    Peopling the sunny rocks with dismal forms,  
And mark'd the madd'ning scene, till some flung high  
    Their tossing arms, and join'd the frantic cry,  
And some approach'd with staring eyes, as though  
    To harden hearts, not yet quite hard to woe ;  
And some affrighted, fled with speed, that fain  
    Would find a refuge 'gainst the direful crew ;  
And craz'd with fear, came full in sight again,  
    Then strain'd their weary limbs, and, shrieking,  
        fled anew.

## xxiv

I heard—I saw the deep'ning horror roll,  
Increasing ever as the moments fled ;  
Till like some lengthen'd storm it mazed the soul,  
And round him, mist-like, fear bewild'ring spread.  
I saw not individual crime or woe,  
A troubled sea, it rag'd and burst below,  
Till, like the taper shining on the shore,  
Which shows the storm-toss'd bark its port once more,  
A form across the raving people press'd,  
Whose heart one human feeling still possess'd :  
I saw him stoop and loose the wretch's chain,  
And they, it may be tired, allow'd the deed—  
'We meet as erst on earth,' he said. 'Again,  
Old comrade, will I aid thy hour of need.'

## xxv

Releas'd, he fled at once—yet turn'd to shout  
A yell of rage that sank to agony ;  
And from their gather'd ranks a cry ran out  
Of mock'ry, bitter as the fiends' could be.  
But faster fled he—Fear was stronger then  
Than even Vengeance, hot in every vein ;



And with a watchful eye, I turn'd to mark  
How, refuge 'gainst his fellow-kind to gain,  
He sought the waving forest cool and dark,  
While o'er him bent the tree alleviating his pain.

## xxvi

Intent to bring relief, more near I drew ;  
But, starting, fearful, when my words began,  
He dragg'd his limbs o'er earth in flight anew,  
Like some crush'd serpent at the sight of man.  
In vain I sought to reassure his dread—  
In vain to quench it by some kindly deed—  
Wing'd by his fear, his quiv'ring frame he sped,  
And Fear became more fearful as he fled ;  
Till 'neath the roots of an o'erhanging tree,  
Which from the bank a little space was set,  
Groaning, he crawl'd, and turn'd to gaze on me,  
Coil'd in his narrow nook, and glaring fear and  
hate.

## xxvii

I left him hopelessly, and wandered on,  
All doleful sounds, all dreary sights among,  
And e'en where Heav'n's light best and brightest  
shone,

Methought the night of mind most darkly hung.  
Some sat in the sun's rays, and mark'd it rise  
Along its daily pathway of the skies,  
With vacant eye, which knew to them 'twould be  
The same one hour through all eternity.  
Some built such fabrics as on earth express  
Man's pomp or pride, and when aloft they grew,  
Smote them to dust again for weariness,  
And then for weariness began their work anew.

## xxviii

There toil'd in the vain labour many an one,  
Whose wishes linger'd in the world behind,  
Coil'd round the things and creatures that were  
gone—  
The haunting phantoms of his cumber'd mind.  
There stood the man, whose transitory pleasure  
Has been earth's glittering joys, or golden treasure ;  
And who reviv'd, amid a world destroy'd,  
To live when all was dead that he enjoy'd.  
Amazed with objects which had met his eye  
When re-awaking, he arose from death ;  
He turn'd to look for earth, and saw it lie  
Expiring in its flames, with all he loved beneath.

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## xxix

And there the conqu'r'or, who on earth had fought  
To make himself a name, stood nameless by ;  
One spot of earth had been the prize he sought,  
Whose whole self now had faded from the sky ;  
And round through that existence infinite,  
He, restless, turn'd his ever-wand'ring sight,  
Gazing through worlds which shone with countless  
flame,  
For that within whose orb he left his fame ;  
But none that Fame remember'd, and he grew  
A vacant wand'r'er, past remembrance riven ;  
Save when some giber of the demon crew  
Mock'd at the homage he on earth had given.

## xxx

Beyond these, some had tried to bring anew  
Time's pleasures into vast eternity ;  
The sound of music round the circle flew,  
And forms went flitting to its melody.  
But seem'd it, as if one who watch'd the bed  
Where all he loved the best, in death was laid,

Should rise, and in the dead one's presence play  
The idle games that pleas'd him yesterday ;  
For strange the eyes I mark'd among the group,  
    And haggard pale the cheeks, and slack the mien,  
While to these sports unconscious did they stoop,  
    Pond'ring far other thoughts that swell'd mean-  
        time within.

## xxxI

And one by one they stopp'd, as though the heart  
    Fail'd at the endless echo of the strain ;  
Gazed in each other's face and turn'd apart,  
    Or sat them down, as ne'er to rise again.  
And smile or laugh was not ; for they who yet  
Mov'd to the music did it as a debt,  
And seem'd to feel it was a pain to Be,  
The pain of vacant immortality ;  
Till all, at last, were still ; and then the sound  
    Of that gay, grievous strain was heard the more,  
Recurring still with its perpetual round,  
    Dead language of Delight, whose life was o'er.

## xxxII

Methought that there were none more lost to God  
    'Than souls on former pleasures so employ'd,

Who, with all Heav'n appointed their abode,  
    Clung to the shadows of a world destroy'd.  
And when I saw Mind's vast capacity  
    Wheel lagging round a little point, and be  
A burden to itself from day to day,  
    I bow'd lamenting o'er their former pride,  
As when the Magian swept a world away,  
    Over its ruin'd beauty, spirits sigh'd.<sup>1</sup>

## XXXIII

Soul-struck, I turn'd away ; and from the throng  
    Went musing on, while still the weary strain  
Came with its joyless melody along,  
    Repeating in my ear its antic pain.  
And some I saw who cast them down, and laid,  
    Hearing the sound, in their clench'd hand their  
        head,  
As though they could not brook that earthly voice,  
Which once they answered when it said, Rejoice.  
And some, in quicker ecstasy of woe,  
    Cried out aloud and toss'd them at the tone,

<sup>1</sup> Weh ! weh !  
Du hast sie zerstört,  
Die schöne Welt, &c.—FAUST.

As though life's pain again were running through  
A form by torture almost turn'd to stone.

## xxxiv

But now I left behind those sounds of wail,  
And follow'd where gray rocks on either side  
Rose up aloft above a narrow vale,  
And in the sun's light bath'd their brows of pride.  
But all below was shadow'd, and so still,  
I heard the long grass move upon the hill.  
Here hell was silent, and it seem'd almost  
The inward fire might lave itself to rest,  
If one could stand alone, of that wild host,  
'Mid the grave calmness of the mountain's breast.  
And to *them*, truly, it had seem'd a place  
Where Quiet still might find one sacred spot;  
For, as I turn'd a vast rock's jutting base—  
A scene before me lay which I have not forgot.

## xxxv

A grove of palms had rear'd themselves on high,  
About a mountain's foot that clos'd the view;

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And resting in its bed, a lake lay by,  
Repeating point and line, precise and true.  
No breeze disturb'd it in its deep serene ;  
No moving thing reflected life therein ;  
A changeless copy of the scene it lent,  
Which rose above it motionless—its face  
In the mysterious mirror downward bent,  
Fix'd, yet unreal, like the forms in Memory's glass.

## XXXVI

And there, between the water and the trees,  
The spirits had erected tombs, like those  
Which earth in every tranquil churchyard sees,  
Yielding to sad and gay the same repose.  
To me, too, seem'd they quiet ; for my mind  
Had with such outer, inner calm combin'd ;  
And I believed that in this place of rest,  
The sentence of the spirit was unbound ;  
And gazed upon each hillock's awful breast,  
Where mind annihilation's peace had found.

## XXXVII

But while I gazed, from the vault's hollow cave  
Crawl'd shapes, still animate with living breath,

As comes the unquiet worm from out the grave,  
Where, living, dwells he in the house of death ;  
Cloth'd in the garments of the dead were they,  
The shroud and cerement of corrupting clay,  
And from our own earth's vault and sepulchre,  
Whatever told of death they copied there.  
With vain desire they long'd aside to fling  
Their new-born weight of immortality,  
And yearning t'ward earth's last and lowest thing,  
Made their ambition and their aim to die.

## XXXVIII

But there they sat on the grave's edge, and sigh'd,  
And saw the scene around with sleepless eye,  
That roved unquiet o'er the breathless tide,  
Or wander'd upward through the sunny sky ;  
Then turn'd again toward the narrow tomb,  
Till grew another hope from out the gloom,  
And rising, with the death-clothes round them,  
press'd  
The heavy foldings, corpse-like, on their breast ;  
And once again descending, laid them there,  
Extended still and straight upon the bier.

But rest they could not ; and the quiv'ring lid  
Struggled and open'd from the eye once more,  
And forc'd again to leave death's mimic bed,  
They rose, and left the grave all deathless as  
before.

## XXXIX

Chill'd with their aspect, motionless and cold,  
At little distance did I sit me down,  
Like him a serpent's fascinations hold,  
And fix'd my eyes upon the eyes of one.  
Not by my pencil can the gloom be shown  
That o'er his awful lineaments was thrown—  
Drawn lips were there, all colourless and fix'd ;  
Glassy, yet living eyes, their ray unmix'd  
With e'en a motion that might speak within  
The heart less frozen than the icy mien.  
His was the shrunken limb, all still and drear,  
The rigid hands that held the heavy brow ;  
As though for years the soul had ceased to stir,  
The heart to hope, the pulse to throb, the thoughts  
to flow.

## XL

By slow degrees accustom'd to the sight,  
I nearer drew and touch'd with awe his hand ;

Then bolder press'd it, that th' arousing might  
    Of outer things might break the spirit's band.  
He stirr'd at length ; his stony eyes rose slow,  
And fix'd on mine their blank, cold gaze of woe ;  
But wordless for a space, until at last  
    My boldness rais'd his spirit from its shroud,  
Then o'er his face a brief fierce radiance pass'd,  
As leaps the flame once more from some consum'd  
    abode.

## XLII

'What dost thou, and what wilt thou, rude un-  
    known?'  
Thus spoke a voice half buried in his breast ;  
It seem'd the echo of a world long gone,  
    Which should have slept ere now, and been at  
        rest.  
'What has thy asking face, thy idle bloom,  
To do where nature shares the spirit's gloom?  
Hast thou not yet renounced the futile strife  
    Of those who think their early dreams are true?  
Earth might have shown, since thou art cursed with  
        life,  
That thou no more shalt cease the fatal gift to rue.'

## XLII

'Not yet,' I cried, 'has it been rued,' for I  
Who loved existence started at his word ;  
'Sad should I be to feel life's fountain dry,  
Whose current kindly yet my pulse hath stirred.  
Some bitter waters I have drunk therein,  
And on its surface early ice-flakes seen,  
Some forms, which once their dear reflection gave,  
No more are imag'd on the ruffled wave ;  
And hues I saw there, 'neath the dawning sky,  
Have melted as the noon-day hour drew nigh.  
Yet as they vanish other colours rise,  
And paint the stream whose course I love to feel,  
Fresh from its waves elastic pleasure flies,  
And reason's calmer joys forth from the current  
steal.'

## XLIII

Uprose that figure as I paused, and laugh'd ;  
E'en such a sound might burst from forth the  
dead,  
And on the watcher's soul dismay engrift,  
Who kept his vigil by the sheeted bed.

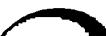
Still as the corpse was every muscle fix'd,  
The cheeks blank whiteness, as before, unmix'd ;  
That hollow laugh no human feeling spoke,  
    No smile, no sparkle mingled with the sound,  
And 'mid the desert silence which it broke,  
    Rang the harsh voice in dismal echoes round.

## XLIV

Rous'd by the tone, came spectres dark and pale,  
    No beam of man or angel in their eye ;  
And join'd their gaze to him who heard my tale,  
    And scanned me mockingly, I knew not why.  
I to their gaze return'd such glance as came  
Forth from the kindling soul's excited flame,  
For what had they to do with scorn and me ?  
    Forfeit in them the rights that still were mine,  
And they, lost spirits ! were no longer free  
    To seek the further bourne, where human grows  
        divine.

## XLV

'Stranger,' thus spoke the phantom, 'thou art he  
    Who, some have told in my regardless ear,  
Art wafted from the realms of earth to be  
    A transient dweller in this distant sphere.



Still haunt thine eye those beams illumed in vain,  
Which once extinguish'd, never light again,  
The beams of hope, which only childhood wears,  
Quench'd ere our manhood by a thousand tears.  
But thou art still upon the verge of life,  
Deceiv'd full oft, but not enough deceiv'd,  
And dream'st of days with better fortunes rife—  
Ay, I too, once, in Hope, the shadow's shade,  
believed.

## XLVI

'Yon world upon me open'd bright and fair—  
Or seeming fair; and with a painted brow  
Smil'd on my trusting eye, as free from care,  
And drew the mask before its inward woe.  
Urged by the inborn impulse of my soul,  
I sprang to joy, and drain'd the offer'd bowl;  
And yet that world, e'en while I drank delight,  
Dropp'd poison in, the wine of life to blight.  
It mimick'd Love, Joy, Friendship's, Beauty's  
glow,  
Yet scarce the *wine* was sweet, all gall the *lees*;  
The pleasure madden'd, and the after woe  
Struck in my trusting heart its serpent agonies.

## XLVII

‘Then turn’d I from my kind, and lonely still  
Have dug all tenderness from out my heart ;  
There is no fibre of the smiling ill  
To grow again, to torture, and depart.  
I sit and muse as I have mus’d before,  
And darker grow the wrongs I ponder o’er  
More curs’d the doom of the immortal soul,  
More evil all the universal whole.  
My powers of mind go forth and learn despair,  
My powers of heart are dried. What oozes on  
Was wont upon a dog to spend its care ;  
It fastens now upon this rifted stone.’

## XLVIII

‘Thy griefs are half thine own, mine all of Fate,’  
Another phantom of the circle cried ;  
I turn’d, and mark’d him, where deject he sate,  
Contrasted with the former’s gloom of pride.  
Not altogether so defac’d with woe  
Was human glory on his pallid brow ;



Not so forlorn in self-made solitude,  
Banish'd from God and man, appear'd his mood.  
It rather seem'd the soul's elastic wing,  
Form'd to grow strong on earth, expand in  
heaven,  
Had suffer'd earthly storms to damp its spring,  
And could not soar at last—relax'd, decay'd, and  
riven.

## XLIX

‘I ask'd not much,’ he said ; and milder flow'd  
His words and tone, as though less sear'd his  
heart ;  
‘My native land was all I knew of good,  
My joy to dwell, my torture to depart.  
The home, the friend, the language which had  
grown  
First on my ear and heart stood there alone ;  
Colours wherein my mind its forms had weaved,  
And tones in which my thoughts were all conceived.  
O'er its loved crags and mountains did the air  
Breathe more like life than other air to me ;—  
The very faults were dear which met me there,—  
They spoke the land of my nativity.

It killed the feeble frame through which it mov'd—  
The soul was grown too pow'rless to be bless'd.  
Hope died within it, Pleasure sank subdued,  
And grief alone became its natural mood.  
Awhile I wander'd viewless upon earth,  
And grieved while gazing e'en on my home's hearth.  
On mountain ridge and lake's lone shore I sigh'd,  
And swept in wailing winds o'er ocean's tide ;  
Until to happier souls awhile 'twas given  
To make the land they too had loved their heaven.  
Then, from their presence chas'd, I had my place  
Here, where the wretched of existence dwell ;  
A land create, perchance, for good and grace,  
But 'tis to me, like all beside, a hell !'

## LIV

'Feeble thou wert,' another spectre cried,  
Who wore a female shape, and sate apart,  
As though her grief, unmatch'd by aught beside,  
Stood king-like, amid many a broken heart.  
'Feeble thou wert, and what except dismay  
Could'st hope when earth's few years were pass'd  
away ;

And with them borne the clay, the rill, the tree,  
Which made up home's best portraiture to thee ?  
Home is not there, where flows th' accustomed tide,  
    Not in the vale that breathes a native air ;  
Not in the hearth that we have lived beside,—  
    It is the living forms, who were companions there.

## LV

'Oh, I had gone wherever snow or sun  
    Froze Nature's breast, or cover'd it with flow'rs ;  
And if meanwhile on mine I bore my son,  
    Had thought each scene we pass'd my native bow'rs.  
I knew not where more precious breezes blew,  
    Save as they touch'd his cheek with healthier hue ;  
I mark'd not where there shone a bluer sky,  
    Save as reflected from his brighter eye.  
*There* was my mirror of the world without,  
    My altar for the world beyond our view ;  
Through him, and to him pass'd, each social though  
    And worship of that gift was all the creed I knew.

## LVI

' My Boy, my First-born, my Beatitude,  
    Died on this nursing breast that flow'd in vain ;

Pain in those eyes that used to seek me stood,  
The clasping fingers now were stretch'd by pain :  
And when they glazed and stiffen'd, what was I ?  
A Mother, and beheld my first-born die !  
Oh ! surely then my part on earth was done,  
My time pass'd by, my aim and purpose gone.  
I, too, must die ! and from that hour unblest,  
Food I refused, and starved the vital flame ;  
Could I have borne to feel it fill my breast,  
And have no cherub lip to drink it when it came ?

## LVII

'They spoke of comfort, but I closed the ear  
That used to listen to my infant's strain ;  
That voice was gone, and ne'er should one less dear,  
With baser sounds, the mother's ear profane.  
They fain would join my hands and lift my eyes  
In prayer submissive t'ward the angry skies ;  
But, no ! He gave the treasure that was gone ;  
He bound my soul about that taken one ;  
And I, obedient more to Nature's call,  
Clasp'd my cold boy, and wept upon his pall.  
I, too, was ready, since his time was done ;  
And when full soon upon him clos'd the tomb,

True to the thoughts which through my life had run  
I died upon *his* grave, whose birth-place was my  
womb.'

## LVIII

Thus spake, thus paus'd they, and with frame oppress'd,  
Languid or rigid, like their sev'ral pain,  
Each, when his tale of sorrow was express'd,  
Sank back to gloominess or grief again.  
I marked them as on earth we sometimes stand  
Before the tomb-place of an ancient land,  
Within whose bourne, in desolation drear,  
Name, nation, story, with the dust are laid :  
But Hope descends to dry for them the tear—  
*These* had left Hope behind—they were the risen  
dead.

## LIX

Oh ! had they thought, while yet 'twas time to think,  
How grief to human souls is like the breeze,  
Which wafts the bark, that lengthen'd calms would  
sink,  
In triumph home across the conquer'd seas !  
Had they but raised their thoughts so high as man  
Has power to look beyond his mortal span,

And o'er their human misery watch'd the star  
    Of their great fortunes in the upper sky !  
Victorious urged o'er mortal griefs the war,  
    And in the strife confirm'd their nature's dignity.

## LX

For 'tis not only in the sun to bask,  
    Nor by bright hearths to shun the tempest's rage,  
That man is summon'd to his earthly task,  
    And shown afar his native heritage.  
More glorious labours are assign'd the race  
    Whose future home is all the breadth of space,  
And who in many a fight must win the strength  
    Which nerves their spirits to that height at length ;  
E'en as the falcon, when the wind is fair,  
    Close to the earth on lagging pinions goes,  
But when against her beats the adverse air,  
    She breasts the gale, and rises as it blows.

*THE QUEEN'S BALL*

'I hear that one hundred and fifty dead people were invited to the Ball, last Friday.'

*Extract from a Friend's Letter, June 17, 1847 (Lady Boyne).*

How soon forgotten are the dead !  
A splendid throng the Palace calls  
To meet and revel in its halls ;  
And of the names that thus are sped,  
Seven score and ten of them are dead.

They had been living when the crowd  
Last met within these portals proud ;  
They shar'd the banquet with the rest,  
They glitter'd brightly in their best,  
The gliding dance they join'd, and smil'd,  
While time was mark'd, and care beguil'd ;  
Since then on dying beds they lay,  
And weeping friends one mournful day

To the dark vault their relics gave ;  
But when the holiday once more  
Came round which call'd them there before,  
Their summons with the rest went out,  
Their life was known, their death forgot.

They heard it in their narrow grave,  
Where cold, and dark, and silent, they  
Beneath the sod or marble lay ;  
And Pluto grimly gave consent  
That to the feast their steps be bent.

Full many a one refus'd his ear  
To sounds which once had been so dear ;  
He shut his eyes again, and said  
'Twas wrong to 'mind him of his woes,  
And made a signal with his head,  
That they should leave him to repose.  
He would not lift the sealing stone,  
Nor ope the coffin lid anew ;—  
To have the wide world for his own,  
Again he would not jostle through.

But some came gliding from their den,  
Glad to be thought of once again ;

The royal words that call'd them there,  
Forced through the door their forms of air,  
Which with the living mix'd once more,  
And paced the lengthen'd corridor ;  
Both heard the music swell and fall,  
The flow'rs breathed perfume over all,  
With robes of state the shrouds were blent,  
And side by side upstairs they went.

But little did the living men  
The things that were among them ken ;  
The spirits wore such ghostly hue,  
That you might see men's faces through ;  
They cast no gloom upon the way,  
Nor dimm'd a lady's bright array,  
For shadows, shadowless, were they.  
Where space was left, they glided on,  
None knew the space held any one ;  
Where throng'd the crowd those chambers wide,  
Their airy forms pass'd through—and e'en  
When press'd the living side to side,  
The risen dead were there between.

One phantom was a girl, who here  
Had glitter'd in her eighteenth year,

So heavenly fair in those bright hours,  
With quaint device of dress and flow'rs,  
That the eye dwelt on her surpris'd,  
As on a fable realis'd :  
One, spell-bound most of all, had burn'd  
With love, which frankly she return'd ;  
But while their silken courtship sped,  
Did sudden clouds a storm unroll ;  
And 'twixt them left a gulf so dread  
As frightened from its place her soul.  
The world, whose fragile ornament  
She for a time so brief had been,  
Heard, faintly, of some dark event,  
That hid her from its festive scene ;  
Heard all that was, and what was not ;  
Inquir'd, conjectur'd, and forgot.  
Meantime her spirit's broken wing  
Just bore her to the grave's relief ;  
Too weak was life's elastic spring  
To brook the bending hand of Grief.  
Her lover watch'd, with broken heart  
(Or what to him and her seem'd broken),  
And the last words that she heard spoken,  
Were, 'Not for long, my life, we part.'

She heard, and smil'd in death, to be  
Love's victim, and its victory.

She came this night and (unseen) mov'd  
Where she had glitter'd, triumph'd, lov'd;  
And 'mid new Beauty, sought for him  
Who should lament that hers was dim.  
She found him straight; but, ah! no dream  
Of her, the dead, there seem'd for him;  
He mov'd among the fair and gay,  
His smile and ready word had they;  
He touch'd soft hands, and breathed a sigh,  
And sought, and found an answ'ring eye;  
And in the dance he mix'd with many,  
As happy and as light as any.  
Then on his breast the phantom rush'd,  
Her phantom hair his bosom brush'd,  
Her fond fantastic arms she wound,  
Beseechingly, his form around;  
    Her airy lips his visage kiss'd;  
In vain, in vain; no thought he cast  
    Back on the memory of the past,  
And she must let it go at last,  
    The cherish'd hope that she was miss'd.

}

A ghost went gliding round, who'd been  
The guest of guests in such a scene ;  
Without *his* wit, the feast was cross'd,  
Without *his* pen, the scene was lost ;  
He came to earth, to weep their lot,  
Who wanted him, and found him not.  
But, where were they ? Did none recall  
His presence, needful once to all ?  
New wits were ris'n—new words were said,—  
And his like him were of the dead.  
Yet genius is a deathless light,  
That still burns on through thickest night ;  
It fires a steady lamp, whose rays  
Descend through time like stars through space ;  
Though twice a thousand years be fled,  
We still repeat what *Æsop* said.  
Thus he, sad ghost ! slow circling there,  
By many an all-unconscious ear,  
Caught at the last the dearest name,  
His own,—the hold he had on Fame.  
'Poor —,' the speaker said, ' his mot,  
The witty soul ! was—so and so.'  
He heard,—he drank the praise they gave,  
And went the easier to his grave.

A ghost was there who died in age,  
Not wearied yet with pilgrimage ;  
A soul so kindly and so slight,  
So guileless in the world's despite,  
    So void of thought, yet rightly feeling,  
It could have no descending weight,—  
'Twould flutter up to heaven's gate,  
    Like down on rising breezes stealing.  
And yet she sigh'd to see the ray  
    Of gem and gold, her own of late,  
Which on a younger bosom lay,  
    The owner of her name and state.  
Not all forgotten, she ; for one  
Whom the new Lady smiled upon,  
Said, ' Is it true, then, that at last  
The ancient Dame away has pass'd ?'  
She heard, and turned her to the tomb,  
    And said ' Alas ! your turn will come.'  
A shade who had been once a mother  
    Now came and mingled with the rest ;  
Among the crowd she sought no other  
    Than her she nursed upon her breast.  
'Twas not so long since she had died—  
    Only six months since she was gone ;

And when they filled those halls of Pride,  
None recollect'd that the Maid

Ought to be summon'd now, alone.

There was she, slender, young, and fair,

White feathers in her auburn hair;

A robe of white, where threads of wool

Scarce made the web less slight and cool;

Silk lace, like cobwebs fine and slack,

And on her arm a bracelet black.

The bracelet 'twas, that mourn'd her mother,

And sign of grief she had no other.

The phantom look'd into her face

If aught of sorrow she might trace;

And gazing, almost smil'd to see

How glad and beautiful was she;

But when she mark'd that fairy thing

Unguided walk the Circe ring,

Who in her gay imprudence did

Things which a mother would forbid—

Oh, then the phantom sank beneath

The real bitterness of death.

'My girl, my darling!' (thus she cried

In words to which was sound denied)

'My treasure, pleasure, first-born, pride,

For thine own sake, oh, think upon  
The doting mother who is gone !'  
Fond words, vain words, that mix'd with air  
Which floated musically there.

Another shade who'd been a son  
Came also there, and look'd for one—  
Not friend or lover, for he thought  
New friends, new loves, his place had got,  
But one in whose dear heart, no other  
Could fill his place, he sought his mother.  
She like the others there, display'd  
Th' embroider'd robe, the jewell'd head ;  
On slender topics of the day  
She had the proper phrase to say,  
And did not shrink, when careless men  
Touch'd on the subject of her pain ;  
For well she knew the saddest lot  
Once pitied, and still pity needing,  
Is by all human kind forgot,  
Except the heart where still 'tis bleeding.  
But though the smile was on her face,  
And words were droppe'd with easy grace,

He saw that over all, was one  
Habitual thought—my son, my son !  
When youth before her gaily mov'd,  
    She prais'd the joyous face and limb,  
But inly said, ‘ My own belov'd,  
    My boy was, would have been like him.’  
And when around her, greetings kind  
    Went on in gay familiar tone,  
She yearning felt how long a time  
    It was since she had seen her own.  
She knew there was a wall'd-up spot  
Where light and living air came not,  
Wherein a mildew'd coffin lay ;  
    And *that* contain'd her fair, her brave ;  
Her sick soul turn'd from courts away,  
    And mourn'd within the unseen grave.  
Mother and son that night once more  
    United, and together were ;  
Where gleam'd the fête, and mirth ran o'er  
    She thought of him, and he of her.

More ghosts ! more ghosts ! one spirit came  
Answ'ring the summons to his name ;

To bear it was so long his lot,  
That he forgot 'twas his no more ;  
But all, except himself, forgot  
That ever it was he who bore.  
He saw his heir, he heard him call  
'Mine !' the broad lands, the hounds, the  
hall,  
He saw the list'ners blandly smile  
As smil'd they for himself erewhile ;  
He felt, 'Could I again go home  
In flesh and blood, as here I come,  
What were the sorrow, the despair  
Of those who wear my mourning there ?'

More ghosts ! before a lovely dame  
One, passionate and trembling came ;  
And mark'd her easy, pamper'd grace,  
Her locks arrang'd, and flow'r-crown'd face,  
In one past hour those two had been  
The actors in a fearful scene.  
Oh, God ! what tragedies pass o'er  
The great world's gilded theatre !  
What deeds may they have wrought before,

Who now so smooth and bland appear !  
And when the fatal scene is o'er,  
    What different fate for him and her ;  
She lightly skims the ball-room floor,  
    And he is in the sepulchre !  
His shadowy hands catch hers, not now  
Her pulses throb, her fingers glow ;  
He says a word, but wakes no flame,  
Recalls no crime, renews no shame !  
The circling world admires and woos,  
    The place with sights of joy is full,  
And she her dainty path pursues,  
    Fastidious, courted, beautiful ;  
And yet across her heart there shot  
A sudden, isolated thought ;  
A sudden sight her mind's eye caught,  
    Places and shapes which once had been ;  
Herself, and him, and all that lay  
Behind in that eventful day,  
    And what was done and suffer'd then.  
To-night what made it reappear ?  
None *living* knew of it, save her ;  
And there was nothing to recall  
Such thoughts in that resplendent hall.

No ; that bright lady knew not why ;  
Perchance the cause was—He was nigh.

More ghosts ! I know their stories well,  
But stories more I will not tell.

*THE HALF-WAY HOUSE*

————— that half-way house, that rude  
 Hut, whence wise trav'lers drive with circumspection  
 Life's sad post-horses o'er the dreary frontier  
 Of age, and looking back to youth give *one* tear.

DON JUAN, canto x. verse 27.

LOOK back, look back ! the height is won,  
 The journey of thy youth is done ;  
 Thou hast pass'd the clime of flow'rs,  
 The solemn snow above thee tow'rs,  
 Look back ! thou never, never more  
 Wilt breathe the air thou breath'dst before.  
 There they lie, those tender hues  
 Veil'd in thickly-rising dews,  
 There they sleep, those tones so dear  
 Which woke and charm'd thy youthful ear ;  
 Never more the flow'rs or strain  
 Shalt thou see or hear again.  
 They were thine, and that is gone,  
 Time of such seasons has but one ;



All was new—thy heart and all,  
    Passion, Duty, Hope, Delight,  
And where'er thine eye could fall  
    There were objects fresh and bright.  
Age must take those fairy things  
    And from them fashion all he feels,  
But his hand is cold, and flings  
A dampness o'er Life's tuneful strings  
    That half their music steals.  
His fingers change the early key,  
    And play it slow and solemnly ;  
Stiff, and cold, and oft repeated  
Is the strain wherein 'tis meted.

Not like Youth, for he can make  
The soul of ev'ry string awake ;  
    Delicate, light, and swift his hand  
Flies o'er the lyre and bids it sing  
Till the very heart in reply will ring  
    And feel itself all in fairy land.

Look back ! for there is the scene wherein  
Thou heardest the song of Life begin.

*A FRAGMENT*

These Lines were originally a fragment. They were awkwardly tacked to another poem, but are here restored to their first state.

E'EN now methinks, I see the ashes stir  
While dawns the Last Day on the sepulchre.  
A power unknown obscurely ranges through  
The dust that bore a human shape and hue ;  
While from mid heav'n the trumpet rolls its wave  
Around the bursting precincts of the grave.  
Slow from the mouldered heap there grows a form,  
Like morn's faint twilight conqu'ring in the storm ;  
Limb comes to limb, and bone from atom-heaps  
To shape, and strength, and place, mysterious creeps ;  
The wither'd flesh returns from dark decay,  
Fruit of the seed in earth's cold breast that lay ;  
The eye its glorious form again has found,  
The ear is fashion'd for the voice of sound ;

The smiling lip is there, but smiles not yet,  
The hand is moulded, and the limbs are set.  
Earth reels and trembles to her base, beneath  
Th' approaching trumpet's dread continuous breath,  
Mountains dissolve, and oceans pass away  
In chaos, whence erewhile they sprang to-day,  
Time ceases at its Maker's high command,  
Strange spheres and other natures are at hand—  
But still proceeds within the grave's rent span,  
Amid a dying world, the birth of man.  
That form is perfect now, but motionless ;  
It stands a statue yet ; but see where press  
Through swelling veins the tides of crimson glow,  
Warmth, strength, and beauty, kindling as they flow.  
He moves ! there's being now within that breast,  
He wakes ! that trumpet-blast hath burst his rest ;  
A smile comes forth, the soul's dawn o'er the night,  
And life looks sudden from the eyes in light.

*THE VALLEY OF THE MORLAS<sup>1</sup>*

RUDE was the ancient forest glade,  
A tangled wilderness of shade ;  
And labour's hand had wrought with pain  
A path o'er cumber'd hill and plain.  
Fantastic stretch'd the giant bough,  
And stunted copse-wood crouched below,  
And suns above but ill could make  
A way to warm the shaded brake,  
Or tint the grass with hues more fair,  
Or stir the long-imprisoned air.

<sup>1</sup> This poem has lain by me all the best years of my life, and at intervals has been added to and amended. The last copy made before this final one is honourably marked with approbation in various places, and criticism in others, by one of the ablest pencils of the day. I improved it as far as I was able according to those criticisms, and now I feel justified in offering it to the world as the best I can do ; which if it fails to please, fails through want of ability, not for want of pains.  
—V. 1853.

All was primeval, wan, and rude,  
A wilderness of savage mood,  
Where fancy musingly might trace  
The signs of a forgotten place.  
But in this more than solitude,  
One spot amid the deepest wood,  
Appear'd a home selected thence,  
To which the desert was defence.  
Not man, nor art, that region claim'd,  
'Twas free from man, by art untam'd ;  
Yet so adorn'd it was, and fair,  
Some spirit seem'd abiding there,  
Who with his hand its beauty wrought,  
And spent on every part a thought.

A rock, whose clefts the birch-trees graced  
With pallid leaf, and motion light,  
To fence the quiet scene was plac'd,  
And hid the world without from sight.  
The blossoms of the foxglove sprung  
Its airiest pinnacles among,  
And woodbine branches, long and fair,  
Hung pendant in the depths of air ;

Down its steep shelving side a brook  
Its way with deep'ning accents took,  
And midway was a hollow space  
Which gave the waters ample place ;  
They gather'd in the rocky breast,  
And took a momentary rest,  
Then with smooth, rapid edge, they pass'd  
Across the stream-worn brim at last ;  
And from the broad projecting stone,  
Leap'd forth with foam-rebounding shock ;  
Then sloping and diffus'd went down,  
Over the slant face of the rock.

Such sound unceasing from them came,  
Of changeful accent, yet the same,  
As suited well th' unalter'd scene ;  
Of hill, and rock, and forest sheen  
Whose beauty spreading all around,  
Found voice in that perpetual sound.

'Twas all adorn'd, alone, remote,  
A self-sufficing, holy spot ;  
Which man might gladly linger nigh,  
To soothe his soul, and please his eye.

His presence there would not destroy  
The charm to which he owed his joy ;  
But nothing could he add ; 'twas he  
    Who mourn'd when onward forc'd to stray ;  
The scene which welcom'd him, would be  
    As beautiful, were he away.

Here, from the trav'ller's path, which wound  
The outer wilderness around,  
I turned, the body's rest to find,  
And soothe my labour-harass'd mind ;  
And when the first delicious sense  
Had passed, of toil-worn indolence,  
And the fair scene that met my view,  
More lovely, though less wondrous, grew,  
That human languor o'er me came,  
Spread to the spirit from the frame,  
Which on the object we pursue,  
Throws, when we pause, a sober hue,  
And tells us, 'twas the chase alone  
    Bestow'd the light we seemed to see ;  
And when that eager mood was gone,  
    Gone too would all the brightness be.

With that unworded feeling fell  
My eyes more sadly o'er the dell,  
Whose deep, majestic, loneliness  
Seem'd on my wand'ring heart to press ;  
For all unlike to human fear,  
Or hope, it kept its steadfast sphere ;  
Unmoved by man, its master's woe,  
Was its perennial beauty's glow,  
And ever youthful flowed its tide,  
While passing generations died.  
Here too, perchance, full many a one,  
    My elder brothers of the grave,  
Like me had shelter'd from the sun,  
    And gaz'd as I did on the wave.  
That gushing fount had cooled their lip,  
Their breast had panted 'gainst the steep,  
But long since then, that lip and breast,  
Had mouldered in the earth at rest ;  
And as the men of times gone by  
Pass'd thus before my musing eye,  
Such melancholy mood began  
    To steal upon me from the scene,  
As gathers round a spot where man  
    Is not, but has or may have been.



I was alone of mortal men,  
Within the limits of the glen,  
But from the silence grew a sound  
Commingling with the things around,  
A voice, whose sylvan accents spoke  
So like the scene whose pause it broke,  
That of its sounds it seemed but one,  
Th' harmonious and the master tone.  
'Oh human heart, how truly thou  
    Hast echo'd those who went before ;  
How oft the thoughts that fill thee now,  
    Have swell'd on my secluded shore.  
True visions on thy soul have shone,  
Of many a form long passed and gone,  
Which rested once upon this spot,  
Lov'd, left it, wander'd, and is not.  
Could thy remembrance backward stray,  
Throughout the earth's protracted day,  
And with the unalter'd scene unite  
The alt'ring shapes that rose to sight,  
The varied speech, and garb, and face,  
Which chang'd as Time pursu'd his race  
Wherein to each a span he gave,  
Betwixt the cradle and the grave,

How wouldest thou fondly linger near,  
To ponder on the time pass'd o'er,  
On many a smile and many a tear  
Which fill my phantom-peopled sphere,  
Fix'd shadows, tho' they're forms no  
more.

' Pause, mortal ; I who saw them all,  
And love their being to recall,  
Will paint the forms that haunt the brook,  
On whom, as e'en on thee, I look,  
Whose race has many a year been run,  
Their will decay'd, their errand done ;  
And yet before mine eye they stand,  
Perpetual dwellers of the land,  
Whose presence fixes here the hours,  
They pass'd among my shelt'ring bow'rs.'

Thus spake the voice, and I who bent  
My gaze towards its place intent,  
Saw gathering in the western ray,  
Where near the stream a low rock lay,  
A semblance such as meets our gaze,  
Trembling o'er earth on summer days ;



Which, indistinctly hovering,  
Has not a name, yet is a thing.  
It seem'd that one invisible,  
Who oft unknown may near us dwell,  
Had come, by some mysterious chance,  
To meet awhile a mortal glance ;  
And could my words take finer shape,  
To catch ideas that escape,  
There would be some by which to speak  
Of shape and hue, distinct though weak ;  
A form, which how it met the sight  
I knew not, save that it was there,  
A quiv'ring and a colour'd light,  
That seem'd embodied but in air.  
Such form may dance among the spray  
That flies from falling streams away,  
And with its slender veil can screen  
The less substantial shape within.  
Such hue may mingle with the bow  
That spans the waterfall below,  
And mixing half with air and sun,  
Brood o'er the stream it calls its own.  
Such shape and hue, to poet's eye,  
May sometimes throw the unseen by,

And come, while watches he the ev'ning fade  
Thinking of shades, itself a shade ;  
As now upon the gray stone's mossy seat  
The Spirit of the Valley sate,  
And spoke all peacefully, yet melancholy,  
Of human scenes, of sorrow, hope, and folly,  
Which in my heart and eye earth's feelings stirr'd,  
While told of joy and grief, his still untroubled word.

'Thou call'st it long, when gazing back,  
Across a twenty summers' track,  
Thy baffled eye those scenes would mark,  
Ere came thy life from forth the dark.  
Nor dost thou err. Time's previous race,  
Is veil'd in solemn night to thee,  
And those few years of all its space  
People alone thy memory.  
But oh, to me, how brief appears  
Such term of pass'd or coming years ;  
How uneventfully they glide,  
Along my shore, and o'er my tide,  
O'er which far longer time must range,  
Ere character'd thereon by change.

The annual flow'rs renew'd and shed,  
The spring rain's tribute to my bed,  
The winter's pomp, when men withdraw  
While pass its hours of strength and awe,  
And summer's radiance, when they come  
To share my joy and see my bloom,  
Such regulated change alone  
Those brief years work around my throne ;  
And I to further time must gaze  
Ere I can reckon length of days.  
To me existence is a stream  
Whose founts so far in distance gleam,  
That 'tis a joy sublime to trace  
A line through such a length of space ;  
A length where all that was, appears  
Through twice three thousand conscious years.  
No dusky cloud is near behind,  
From which emerg'd of late my mind ;  
No onward cloud as dark is near,  
Wherein to plunge and disappear ;  
Behind, before, I gaze on life,  
With all its shifting changes rife ;  
Nor, as I see the moments fly,  
Regret them like the things that die.

‘ Sons of each age to me have brought  
And op’d the treasure-house of thought ;  
For still my shaded bow’r and flood  
Have drawn the pilgrim from his way ;  
Primeval wanderers have woo’d  
The dell that lur’d thy steps to-day.  
I’ve seen the savage, wild and bare  
(Who, naked to the season’s shocks,  
Yet gather’d flow’rs to dress his locks),  
Sink down recumbent there.  
Ecstatic strove his spirit’s flame,  
Wild as the untam’d forest-herds,  
In passions felt without a name,  
And thoughts for which he wanted words.  
Then like spent light’ning would it shroud  
Within th’ impenetrable cloud,  
And leave him rayless and oppress’d,  
As though he knew no joy but rest.

‘ He died, and all his race, and then  
There came a brighter mood o’er men,  
Though slowly grew each added ray,  
As steals the gray dawn into day ;

Here, where the savage stretch'd his strength,  
Has stood and mus'd the sage at length,  
Who, form'd by all that went before,  
The stamp of earth's whole ages bore.  
I saw him with enlighten'd eye,  
Explore the secrets of the sky,  
Perceive the fix'dness of the sun,  
And mark the planets round it run ;  
He knew the earth whereon he stood  
Was hanging midway in the void,  
A trav'ller in eternal space,  
With one appointed path to trace.  
I saw him glow, I saw him burn,  
With joy, such mysteries to learn,  
And rise in his exulting mood  
From those sublimest works to God.  
He felt the good and great unroll  
Their aim stupendous on his soul ;  
And lift him to the calm of mind  
That leaves the passions' rage behind,  
Yet keeps them like a chasen'd flame  
To warm the heart from which they came,  
And make the bosom they refin'd  
Wide as the claims of human kind.

He gaz'd on glorious scenes above,  
Vast as his pow'r and wish to love ;  
Scenes where his spirit should aspire  
To act as freely as to plan,  
And do such glorious deeds as fire  
The brave, immortal will of man.  
He felt that boundless will descend  
From dreams, creation's width to bless,  
The lowliest mortal to befriend  
By daily human kindliness.  
He learn'd to bow his spirit's pride,  
And meekly on the earth abide,  
Although one day his sphere would lie  
Beyond the limit of the sky,  
And ev'ry steadfast star should be  
Less grand, less permanent than he.  
Such lofty lesson reason breath'd  
Upon his soul, such glory wreathed  
To be his aim in upper light,  
By which to raise and guide his flight,  
He lov'd the aim, the glory own'd—  
Ah, goal and glory rather sought than found !

'So wide th' extreme mine eye might trace

Between the sage and savage race,  
Yet were they both, and all between,  
The actors of a common scene ;  
One heart they own'd, one course they ran,  
The mighty family of man.  
I mark'd them when the world was young,  
    I mark them now, and 'tis the same ;  
A change in mood, and air, and tongue,  
    Another garb, another name,  
But still the race who sleep and wake,  
Weep, laugh, desire, and love alike.  
Yes, when *thou* camest, toil-worn here,  
I saw the self-same look appear  
    Upon thy face, which told that he  
Who died, when time had yet to roll  
Whole ages ere he wak'd thy soul,  
    Was brother, living man, to thee !  
The look of toil and solitude  
Spread over many a various mood,  
Which tells that human fate has drawn  
Its thousand stories still from one.

' O'er human kind one fate has roll'd,  
Their thoughts a thousand ways may call,

A thousand tales their doom has told,  
But one conclusion ended all.  
Death waited still by ev'ry path,  
Now naked shown, now crown'd with flow'rs,  
Now sweeping earth in king-like wrath,  
And now a guest in social bow'rs.  
How oft I've stood and listen'd here  
To heart-struck mourners o'er the bier,  
Who, wheresoe'er the lost was laid,  
A tomb-place of their own hearts made ;  
And pondered by my joyous wave,  
The speechless silence of the grave.  
Behold ! where stands yon pond'rous stone,  
Resting its weight the green upon,  
And 'twixt the waters and its base,  
The sward extends in ample space.  
An aged tree above it bends,  
And from the sun its front defends.  
That tree was in its prime when came  
A youthful mother here, whose frame  
Could scarce her toilsome path prolong,  
Yet for her child she still was strong.  
From flames, from foes that child she sav'd,  
Far off the bloody tumult rav'd ;

And here she sought and found a nest  
Wherein the treasure of her breast }  
From human force and fraud might rest.  
Upon the stone her boy she laid,  
Far rais'd above my torrent's bed,  
Beneath the tree whose shelt'ring bough  
Temper'd with shade the noon-day glow ;  
And here at large each little limb  
He stretch'd within the chequer'd beam,  
While, of her woe one hour beguil'd,  
The mother on her infant smil'd.  
Then, as his eyelids closed at last,  
And ev'ry sense in sleep was fast,  
She rose to seek for needful food  
Wherewith to greet his waking there ;  
And left him in the shelt'ring wood,  
Spending her very soul in pray'r.  
Her sleeping boy partook the breeze  
That stirr'd and freshen'd in the trees ;  
The same sun-ray that cheer'd the flow'r,  
Sent to his frame its quick'ning power ;  
It rous'd his blood, it smooth'd his limb,  
And dy'd his cheek a brighter hue ;

The clay that warm'd to life in him,  
Enjoy'd, rejoic'd—ah, suffer'd too.  
Short while before, and far away,  
A storm had darken'd on the day ;  
And where my stream its sources fed,  
Swell'd them beyond their wonted bed.  
E'en then the tide was rolling on,  
The trusting mother—she was gone.  
Unseen of her its bursting force,  
Unheard the thunder of its course ;  
'Twas coming when her boy she laid  
In the predestinated glade ;  
'Twas gath'ring in the future's breast,  
When all seem'd safest and at rest.  
It came, and heavily it fell  
On all that dwelt within the dell ;  
It swept the shore, and bar'd the lea,  
It bowed and brake th' o'erhanging tree ;  
It crush'd the bough, it razed the flow'r,  
Till ev'ry hue grew dim and dark ;  
And in its all-involving pow'r  
It swept the sleeping infant's ark.  
The frame so full of life but now,  
Was shiver'd like the living bough ;

The clay that suffer'd and enjoy'd  
Was like earth's senseless clod destroy'd.  
'Twas not for me to check the wave,  
The darling of a heart to save ;  
Or turn the torrent from its way  
Because the child within it lay.  
I pour'd the tide as freely round,  
As when within their usual bound  
All calmly did the waters run  
With rippling course, beneath the sun.  
And when the flood subsided there,  
I mark'd the fertile earth prepare  
To welcome other, brighter hours,  
And cover o'er its scars with flow'rs,  
And all be as before the tide,  
Except the human thing that died.  
*That* was no more a thing that smil'd ;  
A beaming, speaking, weeping child.  
It was not what the mother left,  
A human shape, adroit and deft,  
Arms that would circle round her neck,  
Limbs prompt to follow at her beck ;  
'Twas clay, that bore as yet the trace  
Of healthful form, and smiling face,

But was her son of yesterday  
No more than other stone or clay.  
She came and saw the waters wild  
Rush where she left her helpless child,  
And star'd upon the madd'ning view,  
And all her loss at once she knew,  
While pain intolerable pressed  
Shrieks from her over-master'd breast.—  
And yet, in sooth, a mortal's grief  
Has but a few brief years to run,  
Time brought its winter of relief,  
And she was ashes like her son.  
But sad, though short, her tragic part ;  
She linger'd still with aching heart  
About the stone, she meant to save  
The boy who to its breast she gave,  
And which had been her darling's grave,  
And wrote these words upon its brow—  
Voice of so many a parent's woe.

“ “THE SADDEST MOTHER WEEPING HERE ALONE,  
UNTO THE DEAREST CHILD ENGRAVES A STONE.”

‘ Poor beating heart ! Fair dying child !  
So early of your joy beguil'd !

E'en had ye lived all years that life  
Did e'er protract its mortal strife,  
Ye must have parted long ago,  
In Nature's ceaseless ebb and flow.  
A century's tide has roll'd above  
That mother's sorrow and her love.

' Full many tales like this might I  
Recite, to raise thy kindly sigh ;  
For still in every shape wherein  
The heart with other hearts may twine,  
Does Death, a veiled attendant move,  
Close following in the train of love.  
Death has a name in every tongue,  
    An emblem in each distant land ;  
A chord in every breast is strung,  
    Alike responsive to his hand.  
They sing his dirge a thousand ways ;  
    But still, like many an instrument  
        In melancholy concert blent,  
One harmony of woe they raise.  
The infant wailing with its cries  
    The lifeless breast on which it lies,

The friends who o'er the cold one bend,  
That just has ceased to be their friend,  
The stricken heart that walks the plain,  
Where, after battle, lie the slain ;  
Or in a city's wreck, alone,  
Mourns for the thousand's voice with one,  
All, all, the common requiem fill,  
Whose cadence ne'er on earth is still ;  
A lower now, now louder voice,  
Mingling with all things that rejoice ;  
For ever there when heard the least,  
Goal of the brightest and the best,  
A thought as present as the mind,  
A grief as old as human kind.

'Such, such is man, so griev'd and gay,  
So form'd alike to meet decay ;  
So full of feeling, hope, and dread,  
Aspiring, sinking, living, dead—  
I've seen him still, from race to race,  
O'er the same path, the life-fire chase,  
Since from their natal bed the first  
Fresh waters of my current burst.

Him thus shall see, till flames that gleam,  
Absorbing earth, o'er me shall stream ;  
Shall drink my river where it flows,  
And wrap my woods in grand repose,  
While in its overwhelming ray,  
My hues dissolve and melt away,  
And in its thunder-voice is drown'd  
    My age-long accents of delight ;  
Dissolving in a tide of sound,  
    And disappearing veil'd in light.  
Then from the valley passing free,  
    Which lies behind, in ruin hurl'd,  
I, phoenix-like, shall rise, and be  
    An element of some new world.'

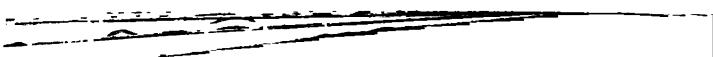
Thus spoke the spirit, and his form  
Seem'd half dissolving as the storm  
Of prophet feeling stirr'd within,  
And shadow'd forth the coming scene.  
More quiv'ring light his aspect grew,  
Transparent more his sunny hue,  
And buoyant on the atmosphere,  
Seem'd rising lighter than the air.

Thus mists, when sudden heat comes on,  
And looks through clouds the mid-day sun,  
Expand and glow, and trembling move,  
Transfus'd with light, the earth above—  
And when subsiding, calm became  
The feeling in his subtle frame,  
He re-assum'd his speech and place ;  
As, when the sun conceals his face,  
The mist forsakes its kindling vein,  
And settles calm on earth again.

‘Ere I beheld the race of man,  
The wild bird whistled in my shade.  
The beast beside my torrent played,  
While at its side the young brood ran.  
I marked the wand’ring herd go by,  
And lov’d their quick yet quiet eye ;  
Who, full of courage walked the glade,  
Wherein they ne’er had been dismay’d.  
My breast was warmed by summer’s ray,  
My leafy wood, my crystal flood,  
Beneath it glancing lay.  
Reflected clouds in pomp sail’d on,  
And trac’d their shades the stream upon ;

Heav'n's wrath, when summer heats were high,  
Came bursting on my uprais'd eye,  
And showed me Nature's glorious form,  
Wrapp'd in the dark veil of the storm.  
Then winds with sudden voice would rise,  
Throw wide the portal of the skies,  
And issuing like a sovereign forth,  
The rainbow spann'd the lighted earth ;  
The autumn-mornings glist'ning rose  
Upon a coloured, bright repose,  
A silent glow of leaf and stem,  
Crown'd with the last night's diadem,  
And broken only by the sound  
Made by my fuller torrent's bound,  
Or by the warble of a bird,  
For some quick living instants heard.  
Each change of season, hour, and year,  
I saw successively appear ;  
The moon at dewy midnight bright,  
With all its quietude of light,  
The yet serener dawn when rest  
Kept o'er reposing life its thrall ;  
But daylight kindling in the East,  
E'en like a mother woke for all.

A teeming solitude lay round ;  
A sea of forest was my bound ;  
Where winds alone would nobly sweep  
As o'er the waters of the deep ;  
Or from his rock the eagle's cry  
Resound across the morning sky,  
While rust'ling in the covert's haunt,  
Stirr'd the unseen inhabitant.  
All else was still ; the recent hand  
Of the Creator stamp'd the land,  
And many a wild's untrodden span  
Still lay between my dell and man,  
Who, new to earth, not yet could trace  
Half of his mighty dwelling-place.  
But when full many a year had pass'd,  
Each lone and lovely as the last,  
A feeling to the valley came  
That all without was not the same.  
A change pass'd o'er the living things  
That sought it in their wanderings ;  
And who erewhile so careless stray'd,  
But now would start at bush or shade  
As though to question if it were  
That something which had taught them fear.



Once came a stag with panting hide,  
A dart was quiv'ring in his side,  
And to th' accustom'd spot he flew  
Where ease and joy of old he knew,  
And sought to crop the flow'ry lea,  
His pastime, food, and remedy.  
But dim of eye, and faint of limb,  
I had no healing herb for him.  
Once, too, when earth was all at rest,  
And silv'ry bright came down the flood,  
There roll'd on its descending breast  
    The long, red lines of blood.  
They came and pass'd, and all was still ;  
They marr'd not the abounding rill ;  
The trees were green, the flow'rs were gay,  
The birds were singing on the spray :  
They told of far events to me  
Which shook a land I could not see ;  
As when some troubled region rocks  
Beneath an earthquake's 'whelming shocks,  
A land at peace far off, will feel  
    A larger billow on its shore ;  
A cloud across its sky will steal,  
    And all grow quiet as before.

Such signs repeated came and went ;  
I waited calmly for th' event ;  
And felt within my dell remote  
A troubled spirit stirr'd without.  
At last I heard a stranger sound  
Break boldly o'er the hills around,  
And Echo for the first time ran,  
Responsive to the voice of man.  
Noblest yet saddest tone it was,  
Heard thus 'mid nature's grand repose ;  
A sov'reign who had lost his throne,  
Disown'd by realms that were his own ;  
A kingly governor, whose land  
Rebell'd against its lord's command ;  
A voice which once was form'd to be  
The crown of earthly harmony,  
But which so oftentimes had grieved,  
Oppress'd by want, by hope deceiv'd,  
Had mourn'd so many an hour of pain,  
And breath'd so many a wish in vain,  
That grief had mingled with the tone  
A mournful cadence of its own ;  
A living and a thinking woe  
Which soulless being cannot know.

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'He came at last ; I saw him stand,  
The form erect, the adept hand,  
The smiling lip, the soul-lit eye,  
Words growing with his wants' increase,  
And wishes wand'ring wide and high,  
Which stirr'd no living heart but his.  
Less strong than half that he subdu'd,  
The conquer'd gave him arms ; the wood  
Was tribute for the shaft of doom,  
The bird had winged it from his plume ;  
And naked, feeble at his birth,  
Earth gave him means to conquer earth.  
But though he stood there bold and free,  
And of all things had once been lord,  
Yet weak and weary-worn was he,  
And show'd that with the world he warr'd,  
Still insecure of victory.  
He sought around the berry's food ;  
He panted, thirsted for the flood ;  
And as my torrent met his sight,  
Down sprang he from the mountain's height,  
As I have seen the wandering deer  
Behold, and rush to taste it here.

Yon basin, where the torrent's shock  
Comes with its first leap from the rock,  
He earliest reach'd, but ere his lip  
In the desir'd fount would dip,  
He stood, and with his eyes upraised,  
One whom he felt, but saw not, praised ;  
Then stoop'd, and where the waters burst  
Drain'd the long eager draught of thirst.

' Reviv'd he rose, and look'd again  
With brighten'd eye o'er hill and plain,  
And took the guidance of the sun  
Again to lead his journey on.  
But still he kept the scene in thought  
Which succour to his mis'ry brought,  
And he and many a hunter bow'd  
Thenceforth to drink the quick'ning flood.  
Ere long the fount by which he sate  
In his first need, grew consecrate ;  
And they who at his knee were rear'd  
Respecting that which he rever'd,  
Would climb th' ascent, as he of yore,  
To pray where he had pray'd before.

Nor, when those men were pass'd away,  
Did, like themselves, their faith decay ;  
Their custom sanctified the spot,  
Although themselves were all forgot.

The pilgrim journey'd there to lave  
With many a rite within the wave,  
The conscience-stricken barefoot stood,  
Tracking his briery path with blood,

And wash'd the painful drops therein,  
As though with them had pass'd his sin.

The hunter, when his way was lost,  
His dog untrue, his purpose cross'd,  
And swollen streams and darken'd skies  
Show'd like offended deities,

Bethought him of the hallow'd soil,  
    And vow'd to leave upon its shore  
A portion of his hard-won spoil,  
    If home might welcome him once more.

And weary wretches who were laid,  
Forgotten half, on sickness' bed,  
Would ponder on the forest scene,  
And think to win back health therein.

Then would they rouse their languid frame,  
And hope half cur'd them e'er they came ;

Would travel through the multitude  
Who wealth, or fame, or love pursu'd,  
And to the goal of health crawl on,  
As 'twere on earth the only one.

' Thus, mis'ry, weakness, gladness press'd  
Around the fountain's hallow'd breast ;  
And nature's untaught prayer would start  
From out the overflowing heart,  
Unfashion'd, undirect, and oft  
Far wand'ring from its proper home,  
By grief, by joy, by feeling taught,  
They knew to pray, but not to whom.  
To *me* full oft was sent the prayer ;  
They call'd the Valley's Sprite to hear ;  
And while they knew no holier name,  
Pure from their lips such worship came ;  
I sate remote, and heard around  
All motionless, the eager sound ;  
For well I knew that though their word  
To me the suppliant vow preferr'd,  
Their prayer attain'd a holier shrine,  
Implor'd a nobler ear than mine ;

E'en as the clouds from incense spread  
    In worship to an idol given,  
Ascend beyond that idol's head,  
    And bear the tribute up to heav'n.  
But not for aye such error slept  
    Over the thought-bewilder'd land ;  
The clouds that shadow'd earth were swept  
    Back by a master's mighty hand,  
And to the world's remotest shore  
    His messengers their errand bore.  
One in a sunnier climate born,  
    Came hither, toil and travel-worn ;  
His darker hue and sable eyes  
    Told of a home 'neath warmer skies,  
Whence o'er the ocean and the land  
    He'd journey'd to our northern strand.  
Here came he when the midnight moon  
    Was sailing at its cloudless noon ;  
The stars were forth, the world of light,  
    The brother-worlds we see by night,  
And o'er them through the peopled sky  
    Wander'd his meditative eye.  
In rev'rence by the stream he bow'd,  
    Where pray'r from human lips had flow'd ;

He also pray'd—but not as those  
Who heretofore the temple chose  
T' adore an unknown God ;  
Simple and solemn was his word,  
In midnight's gather'd silence heard ;  
While with raised eyes, as though a son  
Should gaze his parent's face upon,  
He trac'd the glitt'ring heav'ns above,  
Where all was order, mind, and love,  
And with a name sublime as fair,  
Which ne'er before was uttered there,  
'Our Father !' he began his prayer.  
Oh word to Nature's feelings true !

Heaven on the earth was shining bright,  
And earth, beneath her veil of dew,  
Smil'd back the radiance of the night.  
Her wand'ring sons were some at rest,  
Some waking on her ample breast,  
While one before her starlit shrine  
Gave sacrifice of thoughts divine,  
And like the hush'd creation's priest,  
The ruling God of all addressed.

' He rose at last, and round survey'd  
The temple where his prayer was made,

Which aught less holy seem'd to stain,  
Like sacrilege of some pure fane.  
And such there was ; for hands unwise  
    Had trembling grav'd upon the stone,  
Forms which themselves made deities,  
    Then bent the knee to look upon.  
Frowns on the rough-hewn brow they plac'd,  
    And fear'd the frowns themselves had  
trac'd ;  
Wrath on the lips their hands display'd,  
And strove to soothe the wrath they made.  
Each idol from its place of pride  
In love, not ire, he put aside,  
And left the charge to wood and wind,  
To shadow forth the Maker's mind.  
Then o'er the fount a cross he wrought,  
    A simple sign, whose aspect brought  
An awful scene before his thought.  
That sign no heavy yoke imposed,  
    No fear enforc'd, no hope forbid,  
And of the Deity disclos'd,  
    Not what He was but what He did.  
This done, he sate him down apart,  
    And watch'd the place with musing heart,

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Awaiting till the morn should bring  
A pilgrim to the healing spring.  
One came when day was just begun,  
And on the vale first beam'd the sun,  
When calm the light, and quick the air,  
And all was healthful, fresh, and fair ;  
With foot infirm he came, and made  
Slow progress up the wish'd-for glade,  
And as he toil'd the point to gain,  
Counted each weary step by pain,  
While oft he sigh'd, to mark the deer  
    Fly to its haunts amid the dell,  
And bounding on its swift career,  
    Feel not the limbs that sped so well.  
Oft sank he breathless on the earth,  
Disdainful tears oft gushing forth,  
Pride in his human bosom swelling.  
    Against the chains that Nature bound  
    'Mid the free world his will around ;  
Fear with repeated voice foretelling  
That health could never be for him,  
To nerve his frame and brace his limb.  
Yet strong desire upheld his heart  
    Above the doubts which there had scope ;

It was not hope, and yet its voice  
All fondly imitated hope.

'Toil-worn, and yet with throbbing blood,  
At length beside the fount he stood ;  
And trembling limbs, with toil at strife,  
    And eyes where fev'rish passion gleamed,  
Whose fire broke burning out, and seem'd  
Fed on the very oil of life,  
Bore witness how the moment press'd  
Upon his agitated breast.  
'Twas one that long had been before,  
    Amid the future's dancing shapes,  
It soon would join the days of yore ;  
    Whose flying light the eye escapes.  
Say would that moment keep or break  
The promise it had seemed to make ?  
Oh, stinging doubt ! He dar'd not wait,  
Thus standing face to face with fate,  
But plung'd at once within the wave,  
That was to cheat him, or to save.

'Frail human race ! thy time is brief,  
Thy life a summer's passing leaf.

And yet what worlds of thought may be  
Press'd in a moment's space for thee !  
Keen doubt is there—and hope and fear,  
Each shrin'd within its secret sphere,  
Whereof th' impending hand of Fate  
Is stooping to unbar the gate.  
The roll of long realities  
About to be unfolded lies,  
A life with all its time secur'd,  
To be enjoy'd or be endur'd ;  
A tide of woe, a tide of weal—  
Which does the barrier conceal ?  
Both fates within the gate abide,  
And but one moment to decide.

‘That moment pass'd, and he was left  
Of its deceitful hope bereft ;  
No angel voice an answer gave,  
No healing spirit stirr'd the wave,  
The heedless silence seem'd to dart  
An ice-bolt to his very heart.  
Yet as a statue when the ray  
Moves o'er it in the close of day

Beams with an outward radiance rise,  
And seems to stir and grow to life,  
Nor till expires the passing light,  
Resumes again its own cold white—  
So he, while hope within expir'd,  
Lost not the look it had inspir'd,  
But stood as though he could not dare  
Become familiar with despair ;  
Till all at once his heart gave way,  
And on the earth the mourner lay.

' He deem'd not any human eye  
In that dark hour of need was nigh ;  
But near his place the stranger stood,  
And mark'd his pain with pitying mood,  
And fain to comfort him drew near,  
With outstretch'd hand and kindly cheer.  
He pointed to the cross, and won  
The languid eye to follow on,  
Breath'd forth a name in such a tone  
As best becomes the Holiest One ;  
Paus'd at th' appeal to Deity—  
Then bade him, in that name, be free.

'Oh sudden thrill, unwonted fire !  
Tide of sensation strange and sweet !  
Upstarting on his new-found feet,  
What ecstasies of joy inspire  
The languid frame that lay of late  
Upon itself a burden weight.  
He rose like Man new-made, who feels  
How life its first-born pow'r reveals ;  
He stood amaz'd with happiness,  
A stranger to his own new bliss ;  
Then as the truth unveil'd its brow  
(No fleeting, fading vision now),  
He sprang at once to take the measure .  
Of his new strength's abounding treasure ;  
Up the steep mountain side he strain'd  
Ecstatic as he met the air ;  
The peak that highest rose he gain'd  
With joy as wide as earth seem'd there.  
He stood upon the torrent's brim,  
He leap'd across the foaming stream ;  
He rush'd upon the paths which hung  
The boldest precipice among ;  
And gaz'd around as one who hath  
Earth now for his unshackled path ;



And he no laggard more must be  
Behind the busy, gay, and free.  
At last he came with flying pace  
Back to the all-eventful place,  
And bent his grateful knee on earth  
To Him from whom his joy had birth.  
Words for his thoughts were all too weak,  
His eyes, but not his tongue, could speak,  
And eloquent of thanks they shone  
The stranger's answ'ring face upon.

' What need to say the stranger's knee  
Was bow'd beside him on the lea ?  
And to the Heav'n above referr'd  
The grateful look, th' adoring word ;  
To One invisible, yet nigh,  
He raised the pilgrim's heart and eye,  
Till joy-instructed, he receiv'd  
The living truths, receiv'd and liv'd ;  
And when—the night hours drawing near  
Forth on his way th' apostle went,  
And told of toil and hunger drear,  
And days in thankless labour spent,

The grateful pilgrim undismay'd  
And only of the past afraid,  
Clung to him still, as those who flee  
The dungeon's walls, and freedom see  
And when they once that view obtain  
Can die, but not return again ;  
So he, who knew of no dismay,  
Except to be as yesterday,  
Pass'd by the stranger's side, forsaking  
All that of old, nay still was dear,  
Through the wide world his journey taking,  
Contented since that friend was near.

'Thy tale, too, Wand'rer, is enwrought  
Within my phantom-peopled thought,  
And thou between thy birth and tomb  
Wilt leave a trace upon the gloom.  
The world will mark it not, for far  
Glides through the crowded heav'n thy star,  
And clouds that veil its quiet ray  
It cannot frown nor smile away.  
But in thy heart mine eye has read  
What never human eye might test ;

And mark'd therein what change has sped,  
While outward all appear'd at rest.  
And 'tis my pastime there to see  
Thy hidden springs of grief and glee,  
And trace that changeful world within,  
Borne shrine-like through a busy scene.  
There can I mark, though clos'd at last,  
The wounds that once were bleeding fast,  
And call'd thy silent spirit still  
To muse upon the inner ill,  
Till as they heal'd, and were at rest,  
Thy heart renew'd its wasted pow'rs,  
As when—the coffin in its breast—  
The grave conceals itself in flow'rs.  
There lie the wrecks of feeling, springing  
Too rashly up in life's beginning,  
Which though they seem'd the very pride  
And being of its vital part,  
Were torn perforce and cast aside,  
Although the scathing rent thy heart.  
And there, alas ! are things less fair,  
The wasting track of Sin yet bare,  
Whose flames in lurid splendour shone,  
But sered the soil when they were gone ;

And crossing still thy path and way,  
Their obstacles thy course delay ;  
While bitterer far such foes appear,  
Since 'twas thyself who set them there.

'That heart of thine I choose 'mid all  
On whom mine eyes attentive fall,  
To hear the records of the dell  
Where seeing and unseen I dwell.  
Perchance a hundred years may wane  
Ere mortal hear my voice again ;  
A thousand forms before me stray,  
Ere one shall tempt me as to-day,  
To mix as now I do with thine,  
The current of his thoughts and mine.  
When virtue comes, I sit to trace  
With spirit rous'd its godlike face ;  
When sorrow wanders here alone,  
Unmov'd I keep my mossy stone,  
And with a still observance see  
A passion never known to me.  
But thou, I know not why, hast wrought  
My thought to commune with thy thought ;



And feelings which o'er all flow free,  
Have grown to words when turn'd to thee.  
I love thy melancholy eye,  
    The portal of a musing mind,  
The lip where the long stifled sigh  
    Turns to a smile for human kind.  
I love thy wand'ring mood which long  
    Dwells on some lonely hue or shape ;  
While answ'ring words of broken song  
    Thy solitary lip escape.  
I too can muse, and dream away  
    'Mid real sights, false thoughts, the day ;  
Can scan the clouds that o'er me sail  
    And fancy faces which they veil ;  
Can hear the winds and branches play,  
    And the still sounds of middle day,  
Till from such elements arise  
    Life, death, and fate upon mine eyes ;  
Spheres far remote around me bend,  
    Scenes that are not as yet, descend,  
And Fancy stays her flight, and deems  
    That truth is born amid her dreams.  
  
    'Tis true that Man's unquiet sphere  
    Of love and fame, of hope and fear,

Spreads not its influence to this glade,  
Where I my mystic home have made.  
Those passions fill a moment's space,  
They cloud or light a mortal's face ;  
The form belov'd in dust must wane,  
    The kindly voice too soon is mute,  
The heart has turn'd to earth again  
    Ere half its pow'rs have borne their fruit ;  
But still that transitory glow  
Is all of bright that man may know,  
Those fleeting pangs of pain and strife  
Are half his momentary life ;  
And were my time as brief as thine,  
I too should o'er its flight repine,  
And learn to shed that tear which lies  
Uncall'd for now within my eyes ;  
Like the deep lake that lies at rest  
Lock'd in a mountain's rocky breast ;  
Unbroken sleeps its shelter'd stream,  
Ne'er urg'd by breezes o'er the brim.

'Farewell ! thy foot a trav'ller goes  
Into a land it little knows ;

Perchance the step it next must make  
Is on the quicksand or the snake,  
And in this day's nigh counted hours  
Thou treadest the last time on flow'rs ;  
Perchance thou ne'er again must stray  
Here where thy life has left a day,  
Or not till years have roll'd along,  
When dried thy heart, and mute thy song,  
And thou no more with darken'd ken  
Canst see the valley's spirit then.  
It may be, too, that I can see  
Some change or chance reserv'd for thee ;  
The shifting scene of human life,  
The night that ends its fitful strife,  
The bliss or woe, the shade or bloom,  
That lights a home or delves a tomb.  
But ask not, though thine eyes illumine  
Eager to follow through the gloom,  
For 'tis thy mortal fate to go  
Blindfold alike to joy and woe,  
To mourn the long-protracted night  
    Unconscious that the dawn has broken,  
To rest securely in delight  
    E'en when its death-doom has been spoken.

Farewell ! the hours that here have fled,  
The scenes wherein those hours were sped,  
Are in thy Mem'ry's book a gain  
From the uncertain, dark, and vain.  
And oft when life has nothing bright  
Onward to lure Hope's ready sight,  
Thy soul its thoughts will backward throw  
To shapes and scenes of long ago,  
And shutting out the present shade,  
Will to the sunny Past have flown,  
Where pleasure has been, and is grown  
Immortal even as the Dead.'

He ceas'd, and waited not reply  
Except my fix'd attentive eye ;  
On that, a quiet smile he cast,  
Not joy, not grief, though 'twas the last.  
And still intent, I mark'd the shade  
Into more shadowy fineness fade,  
And flow'r's and trees behind appear  
In hue and outline bright and clear.  
So much akin he was to air,  
Scarce knew I when he melted there ;

So like his form to flitting light,  
It still seemed dazzling on my sight ;  
I lost him not in wood or stream,  
He vanish'd not in cloud or beam ;  
No sound as though he pass'd was heard,  
No rustling noise of garments stirr'd,  
I saw him on his wonted stone,  
Until the latest line was gone—  
The haunting spirit of the spot  
Was viewless, but departed not.

*VENICE, 1853*

WHERE swell the Adriatic waves,  
A city in their current laves,  
The water parts, the water meets,  
Dispers'd and channel'd by the streets ;  
The gem-wrought shrines of Venice rest,  
And marble halls, on ocean's breast,  
Her ramparts are the waves subdu'd,  
Her pavement is the restless flood,  
On either hand outstretch'd, arise  
Broad palaces before the eyes,  
With church and court, and long alcove,  
And balcony the porch above,  
And pointed arch, and pillar sheen,  
And halls, and still the sea between.  
Yes, 'tis the sea whose waves have curl'd  
In from the other side the world,  
And bending on my knee, I dip  
To taste its brine, my eager lip,

And teach my wond'ring sense to own  
The deep sea and the streets are one.

Its shore is here the palace steps,  
And daily from Atlantic deeps  
The flowing tide ascends the stair,  
And ebbing leaves it wet and bare.  
The sea-birds on the walls alight,

And gaze with wond'ring eye and grave,  
Encount'ring in their lonely flight  
A sudden city on the wave.

The sea-weeds fasten firm their stem  
On steps which men partake with them,  
And here the loaded vessel meets  
A highway through the city-streets.

Yet firmest earth no elsewhere knows,  
On seven-fold hill or fane-crown'd height,  
Or river-harbour bath'd in light,

Or golden horn, or eastern plain,  
Such glorious shapes as Venice shows  
With place and column, arch and fane,  
And palace, each one with its name.

Manfrini, Pesaro, and he  
First of the bard-sung Foscari ;  
And Dandolo, the son of Fame ;

Giustiniani, who bestow'd  
On Venice once, and all his blood ;  
Grimani, Mocenigo, all  
Whose story lives upon their wall,  
The Golden House, the Casa d'Or,  
And Rizzi on the outer shore.  
Rizzi, a name that now has fail'd,  
Yet once an honour'd sound that sail'd  
Where'er Venetian flag prevail'd.  
Its owner brought the east and west  
To gild his home on Adria's breast—  
That home which like a settling ship  
Is sinking slowly in the deep.  
I saw it one delicious day,  
When in the gondola I lay,  
And here and there through streets remote,  
Glided at will the obedient boat.  
I lay and listen'd, eye and ear  
Fix'd on my guiding gondolier,  
While pointed he, where rose behind  
An ancient house, forlorn of air,  
Fast shut against the gentle wind,  
And walls untended, bleak and bare.

Not *that* the Rizzi Palace—no—  
That house no standard-flag could show,  
Yet o'er it let me pause awhile,  
Ere turning to the Rizzi pile ;  
For none could be so great as those,  
    Who in its gloomy sanctu'ry  
Their awful dwelling made ;—it was—  
    ‘ La casa degli spiriti.’  
He told how there the mighty ghosts,  
Who swept the earth in midnight hosts,  
And troubled people, and their kings,  
And blighted navies with their wings,  
One solemn day, by solemn men  
    In council met at Trent—were call'd,  
And with a spell compounded then.  
    Within that lowly roof entrall'd  
There dwelt they then ; there dwell they  
    now ;  
Compell'd before the charm to bow ;  
And never can the spirits burst  
The bond, still pow'rful as at first.  
They roam their narrow space, and mourn  
The freedom that can ne'er return,

And grieve as ghosts may grieve, with sounds  
Whose wail against the heart rebounds ;  
And only homeless men will dare  
The spirits' fearful home to share.

Thus speaking he, I turn'd to trace  
Again the ghostly dwelling-place ;  
But as I turn'd a nearer sight  
Caught me with aspect sad and fair ;  
Its time-tints gilded by the light  
The Rizzi's former home lay there.  
The palace on the waters sate  
A whole street's length—and gate on gate  
Pierc'd the thick wall, with arch and scroll,  
And placid head, that crowned the whole.  
The moving street, that rose and fell  
Beneath the gondola's light swell,  
Plash'd restless 'gainst the ancient door  
Which seem'd built up to ope no more,  
Guarding behind it, as a fort,  
The precincts of the ample court.  
And scarce above the wall I caught  
Some glimpse within, of windows wrought

With scrolls, that twin'd in stony wreath  
Th' armorial, open helm beneath.

'Here dwelt the Rizzi once,' he said,  
'But all their name have long been dead,  
And no new race has chain'd its bark  
So far away from fair St. Mark.

The poor have been its dwellers since  
It closed on its last merchant prince ;—  
Some in these right-hand rooms live free,  
Wherein the painted roof you see ;  
Some high above ; for stair on stair  
Climbs to the pointed windows there ;  
Some part the hall, where used to wait  
The gondoliers within the gate,  
Wherein the signor's ent'ring boat  
Up to the palace-stair might float.  
And others lodge where used to be,  
Across the court, and next the sea,  
The many-storied magazine  
In which his merchandise has been.—  
No more on this side opes the gate  
Which once unclos'd for Rizzi's state ;  
There's but the side-way, rude and steep,  
For its new master's humble step.'

Thus spoke he ; and my lazy thought  
Followed the moral that he taught.  
Like water are the poor ; they wait  
Each empty spot to penetrate,  
And when the wall, and rock, give way,  
Silently, humbly, enter they.  
Rich men uprear'd these halls of pride,  
Poor men within the halls abide ;  
Here left alone, the infant brood  
(While toils the mother for their food),  
Play with the fragments, carv'd or gilt,  
Of costly frame, or shiver'd hilt.  
The father hangs his net to mend,  
Where broken balustrades extend ;  
The board that holds their household all,  
Rests on a fallen capital ;  
No evil influence is cast  
O'er the new dwellers from the past,  
The rich man's ghosts of joys gone o'er,  
Are kindly servants to the poor.  
'Say, will you enter?' 'No, not now ;  
I cannot quit this gliding prow ;  
Where can I better be than here  
With gondola and gondolier,

Thus on a magic sea afloat? '  
Then on our way the bark he sends ;  
First forward on his foot he bends,—  
A moment pauses on the oar,  
Throws himself strongly back once more,  
The sloping footway firmly treads,  
To the bright sun his bosom spreads,—

And at his touch the graceful boat  
Glides forward with a silent motion,  
Like foam upon the waves of ocean ;  
But rein'd and manag'd like a steed  
Each impulse of his will to heed ;  
To follow when his oar he dips  
On either side in ocean's lips ;  
To sway, nor little, nor too much,—  
To pass through crowds and never touch,—  
To float in idlest bliss all day,  
Like time that wings unmark'd away ;  
To stop, with waters rust'ling clear  
And foaming round its check'd career ;  
To feel the winds its duty claim,  
Yet more obedience yield to him—  
Its shining crest it curves, and glides  
So slim along o'er Venice tides,

With cushion'd lap the limbs to please,  
And arms of such voluptuous ease—  
Oh never healthiest foot that springs  
Across the turf on nervous wings,  
Or smoothest car, or Arab horse  
With back that sways us in its course,  
Such luxury of motion gave  
As gondola on Adria's wave !

Oh bear me thou delicious bark,  
This ev'ning hour to broad St. Mark ;  
The sky is moonless yet, but light  
Of cloudless skies adorns the night ;  
Clear darkness where the stars abound  
And light a portion with their fire,  
With space beyond and space around  
Where e'en their mighty flames expire.  
By palace and by porch we go,  
Nothing disturbing them, as we  
In silence by the portals row,  
And do but plash the yielding sea.  
On each side houses stretch awhile,  
Then breaks away the right-hand pile



And rises up a church-crown'd isle,  
Whence o'er broad waves that mix with night  
Goes wand'ring my contented sight.  
Between me and the town there lie  
The silent waters—and on high  
The silent airs—and o'er my joy  
Creeps welcome—the serene alloy  
Of pensive thought and lonely feeling  
Of men o'er darken'd waters stealing.  
But on the shore, a crowd of light  
Makes portions of the darkness bright.  
The stir of throngs, the mingled word,  
The hum, the sway, the tread are heard,  
That tell the lonely traveller  
His kind, and his kind's joys, are there.  
Thy place St. Mark!—and drawing near,  
In glides the adept gondolier,  
And reins his bark beside the pier.

Oh thou, St. Mark ! I gaze on thee  
With eyes that drink a joy divine,  
And o'er again, again come there,  
To fix thine image strange and fair

Upon the holiest inward shrine  
Where lie thy relics, Memory !  
In moonless nights I see the beam  
Of lamps that round thine area gleam,  
Strive vainly with the mighty space,  
Where mingle men of ev'ry race ;  
Half light thy tow'rs, ascending high  
To darkness in the upper sky,  
And flash o'er court and covered way,  
And garbs all colours, grave and gay,  
While Austria's warlike music swells  
Scarce tun'd to suit Venetian bells.

I come again, and see the moon  
Resplendent in her cloudless noon,  
A steadfast flood of glory shed  
On thy two columns' lifted head,  
Light up the trac'ry complicate  
Where Mark lies tomb'd in antique state  
Illuminate each long Arcade,  
Reveal mosaic forms, which seem  
The living guardian souls, till fade  
The brightest lamps beneath her beam.

And lonely should her empire be  
Over these realms of earth and sea—  
Quench your vain lamps, and be they dark !  
The moon is feast-light for St. Mark.  
Such nights of summer revelry  
When looks she downward in the sea,  
Too straight o'er head a path to throw  
Across the moving waves below,  
But plunging in their stream her brow ; }  
See all she lights, and fear but e'en  
To wink your eyelids, lest the scene  
Should be a fairy-work, and when  
Your mortal lids unclose again,  
The moving sea, and arch, and place,  
Broad steps and islands, church of grace,  
Delicious winds, and mixture choice  
Of waves, and sweet Italian voice,  
Should in that moment fleet away,  
A dream too good for mortal clay,  
And shade and cold close round in pain,  
And all be common life again.

Again I came, when winds were free,  
Blown all night from the tossing sea,

And stepp'd from off the granite pier  
Beside the balanc'd gondolier.—  
To seek that hall, the word was giv'n  
Which shrines the blue-rob'd Queen of Heav'n,  
Round whom a crowding atmosphere  
Of countless angels mingle clear,  
While o'er her—darkness 'neath him furl'd,  
Glows the Creator of the world.  
And faint mine eyes were to be blessed  
By shapes which fancy yet but guess'd ;  
But when the joyous wind I met,  
Which furrow'd up the moving street,—  
When I the highway of the town  
Saw foaming round me, and the wave  
Ceaseless and short about was thrown,  
And o'er my face its salt spray gave,  
And when alert the boatman sped  
His gondola's high tossing head,  
Still leaving foe-like floods behind,  
Still keeping way against the wind,  
I cast all purpose by to linger  
O'er the best touch of Titian's finger—  
For other towns, and other place,  
Have sculptur'd forms and pictur'd face,



And elsewhere eyes may come to know  
What roofs can guard and gall'ries show—  
But here—I pray'd my gondolier  
To speed right on his bark's career,  
Beholding with exulting mirth  
One of the rare sights of the earth,  
Such sight as seldom Poet meets—  
A sea-storm, Venice, in thy streets.  
At times, too, when the night was down,  
Manning again my sable bark,  
I left the broad-ways of the town  
To float in darkness doubly dark,  
Where lofty houses gloomily  
Imprison'd held the moody sea.  
Silent I pass'd each dusky home,  
Wond'ring and watching what should come ;  
No 'luminating radiance shone  
The murky yielding flood upon,  
Save when some passage broke a way  
Through the thick walls—a steadfast ray  
From its low vault far inward came  
In one suspended spot of flame,  
And show'd me that a path was there  
Through shades, that led on, on, but where ?

No sound throughout the house-fill'd spot  
To say if life was there or not,  
No sound save when from street to street  
The narrow corner turning fleet  
My boatman toned his warning strain,  
Brief, and in silence lost again.  
And still and dark once more we seem  
A dream—but yet a living dream.  
Till suddenly the beak'd prow glides  
Out and at once on broader tides—  
The Grand Canal, its waters rife  
And midnight hours, with light and life,  
Broad market place, Rialto bright  
E'en with extravagance of light,  
And moonbeams which a lustre gave  
To ev'ry window-pane and wave.

Each hour and place brought something new,  
And strangely fair, to charm the view ;  
At early morn I've seen the load  
Of picturesque, delicious food.  
The fig, the grape, the yellow gourd,  
High heap'd with shelt'ring leaves on board ;

I've watch'd the palace-steps, the square,  
The haunters of the landing stair,  
    There the guitar sounds weak yet sweet,  
        Guiding the singer's easy note ;  
    There girls around the Pozzi meet,  
        There begs the beggar in his boat.  
I've seen a sunset, heav'nly fair,  
    When all those pinnacles of story  
        Stood in the brightly colour'd air  
        Like spirits in a world of glory.  
And out away, among the isles  
    I floated, where the road was shown  
        From space to space, by wave-worn piles,—  
        The ocean highway of the town ;  
    Whence saw I royal Venice lie  
        Between the jewell'd earth and sky,  
        Transparent, clear-cut, delicate,  
        Like cameo on an opal set.

Dissolve, dissolve, remember'd scene !  
    I stay too long, I look too near,  
        Too lovely does the past appear ;  
    The thing that matters now I ween  
        Is what I am—not what have been.

*THE MOSEL*

WE passed a day on Mosel river,—

Our day awaken'd with the sun,  
It ended not till light was over,  
And then, alas ! that it was done.

The early morn with dew was rife,  
The low light shadowing out the scene,  
Noon, with intensity of life,  
And evening bright with crimson sheen.

Through glorious shores it flow'd for ever,  
Reveal'd on our contented eyes,  
It might have been that golden river,  
On both whose banks was Paradise.

I sate by thee, mine own dear friend,  
And thou and I were there alone,  
That day at least I did not fear  
That we should part ere day was done.

We saw those lovely things together,  
Which never will depart our mind,  
We saw and felt that blessed river,  
Which now, alas ! is far behind.

The liquid opal of the stream  
Dark with the light obliquely shed,  
The reach far stretching to the beam,  
Then doubling back whence first it sped ;

Successive villages that rose,  
Each with a spire address'd to God,  
Quaint dwelling-places rear'd of those  
Who long since slept beneath the sod ;

Groves bord'ring all the water-side,  
With pathways where the peasants stood,  
And gath'ring into woods, whose pride  
Adorn'd the hills above the flood.

And where the porph'ry rock threw out  
Before the sun its crimson sheet,  
There vineyards spread their wealth about,  
Maturing in the noonday heat.

And then along some shelving shore  
The stream at times rushed swiftly past,  
The boatman, resting on his oar,  
Let go our vessel light and fast.

And we among the sudden stir  
Of poppling waves, were carried by,  
And to each other smiled to mark  
The foam-flakes sparkle on the eye.

Oh joyous river! pleasant day!  
Not loud wert thou, but dear and bright;  
And full of gladness, as the sky  
Is full of air, the day of light.

How joyful will it be to dwell  
On thee, if bright my future days,  
But oh! if grief renew its spell,  
How sad will show thy former rays.

I pray thee, Time, reveal the way  
That lies before my steps for ever;  
Shall I be glad or sorry, say,  
To think upon the Mosel river?



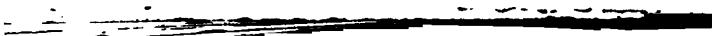
*'DEATH, DEATH! OH! AMIABLE,  
LOVELY DEATH!'*

SHAKSPEARE.

THERE beat a heart whose life was grown  
A thing by Grief made all its own ;  
Which felt Affliction's heavy power,  
Each minute of each weary hour,  
And counted every day that pass'd,  
By being bitt'r than the last.  
Then came full many a lovely thing,  
A comfort to his woe to bring,  
And tried by smile, and play, and jest,  
To melt the icebands from his breast.  
Mirth, with her eye half hid below  
The archly-drooping lid of snow,  
Danc'd near with feet as quick and bright  
As glances from the wave the light,  
And call'd him from his trance away,  
To think no more, but laugh and play.

But oh ! that sweet fantastic grace  
Met nought responsive in his face,  
His heavy eye looked up in vain,  
The brightness of her eye to gain ;  
It seem'd his heart but ill could brook  
The stir and sparkle of her look,  
And while she still her revel kept,  
He turn'd and hid his face, and wept.

Then Splendour came, and pour'd his store  
Till Fancy could conceive no more ;  
And gave whatever Pride and Power  
Could ask to deck their stateliest hour ;  
But sad the gold and purple press'd  
Upon the mourner's aching breast,  
And harsh the jewel's ray to him,  
Whose weary sight with tears was dim.  
He ever saw, 'mid all they gave,  
The damp walls of a narrow grave ;  
The coffin where his gaze had strain'd,  
To see the form that lid contain'd ;  
And heard, 'mid every festive spell,  
The clods that on that coffin fell,



' Give me the kiss for which I pine,  
Of lips that press'd themselves on mine ;  
What worth thy brightness and thy bloom,  
While they are with'ring in the tomb ? '

Next Wit drew near—all objects proving ;  
His quiv'ring wings for ever moving ;  
Which as they met the sober rays  
That fell upon their living blaze,  
Untwisted all the hues of light,  
And gave a rainbow back to sight.  
But he, the mourner, turn'd aside,  
And thought how Love and Peace had died ;  
Wit's flame he saw not as of yore,  
For veil-like rose his thoughts before ;  
He could not hear the voice of Wit,  
For there was Sorrow's drowning it.

Then came a form, whose steady eye  
Unchang'd let all things pass him by,  
And pale and calm came gazing on  
Up to the sorrow-stricken one.  
The wretch uprais'd his languid head,  
And hail'd that wish'd-one's ling'ring tread,

And bar'd his breast, thereon to fold  
The long'd-for touch, serene and cold.  
'Last friend ! 'tis thou canst do,' he cried,  
'What Mirth, and Wit, and Splendour tried ;  
Touch my hot heart, and weeping eye,  
The heart will freeze, the lid will dry ;  
Unchain my soul, and let it be  
Free 'mid the spirits of the free.'  
He spoke, and with departing breath  
Bless'd the restoring hand of Death.

*WE TWO HAVE SATE AND SUNG  
TOGETHER*

WE two have sate and sung together  
Full oft that old familiar strain ;  
Ah, friend ! who now shall tell us whether  
We e'er shall do the like again ?

My voice is faint, and dim mine eyes,  
And heavy comes my oft drawn breath,  
And ev'ry day that onward flies,  
Says plainer than the last, 'tis death.

Oh ! when again two voices try  
That strain, not ours the notes shall be ;  
*Thou* wilt not sing it then, and *I*  
Shall sleep unheeding e'en of thee.

The thought of me will cross thee then,  
Where'er thou art, whate'er thy doom,  
And from the hum of living men,  
Invite thy Spirit to the tomb.

There wilt thou see, while crowds rejoice,  
My prostrate form, remote and still,  
And mark, 'mid many a living voice,  
The silence of the grave I fill.

I would that moment I might be  
A sunbeam on thine eye to start,  
Or with as bright a witchery,  
A cheerful thought to cross thy heart.

Mourn not, Beloved—think I pass'd  
Before my soul's first virtue died,  
That from the world remotely cast,  
I fell not, for I was not tried.

And in me, youthful still, surviv'd  
The peace, the truth, my Maker gave ;  
They might have withered, had I liv'd,  
But grew immortal on my grave.



If e'er that strain then, mournful seem,  
    Oh let my death so early wrought  
Be to thine eye the sunny beam,—  
    My humble lot, thy cheerful thought.

*THE LADY<sup>1</sup>*

THERE was an ancient dwelling-place,  
 The home of English Squires ;  
 An ancient Lady dwelt therein,—  
 She had it from her sires.

Her purse was fill'd with gold I trow,  
 Her house with household store ;  
 And when the neighbours' pelf wax'd low,  
 They came to her for more.

She gave her gold—she sought the sick,  
 And ask'd them of their harm ;  
 Forth walking with her Bible-book,  
 Her basket on her arm.

<sup>1</sup> This ballad has been set to music by the Chevalier Neukomm, under the title of ‘The Old English Lady.’

She lov'd them all, and they lov'd her  
With good old loyalty,  
And when she wax'd so faint and old,  
They griev'd that she must die.

'Alack !' they cried, ' we'll pray for her,  
That she may come about,  
She's been a friend for fifty years,  
We cannot do without.'

But yet the good old Lady died,  
And woe was all her land ;  
They put the shroud about her face,  
And rosemary in her hand.

They plac'd her in her own old hall,  
The servants stood around,  
The church-bells, as they bore her forth,  
Toll'd out a heavy sound.

Old folks and young were come to see,—  
Of tears there was no lack,  
The tenants walk'd behind in pairs,  
Each in a suit of black.

They laid her in her father's vault,  
'Mid coffins many a one !  
The Parson said his holy words,  
And they made fast the stone.

That stone will never more be rais'd,  
Now she has got her place ;  
That childless Lady was the last  
Of her old name and race.

*SACRIFICE*

I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.—*2 TIM. i. 12.*

My all, my all, I've sacrificed to God ;  
 Love, joy, the bright career wherein I trod ;  
 Bound them to regions more than earth sublime,  
 Deferr'd them to an hour more fix'd than time.  
 'I am persuaded he can keep them all,'  
 And give me each one back from forth its pall  
 Bright as I lay them down, restored at last,  
 When this sad present shall have changed to past.  
 I shall be happy then with all the power  
 Of all the anguish of this bitter hour :  
 I shall regain the dear ones of my home,  
 Be free through every world at will to roam ;  
 Not with bound hands shall I behold distress,  
 But be as able as my will to bless.  
 Ambition shall attain each just desire,  
 And love and joy burn with a spirit's fire.

October 1862.

*THE YOUNG SICK MAN*

Published in the 'Golden Calendar' for 1865.

FRESH snow is now the mountain's crown,  
And clouds with growing day come down,  
And I who in the springtime trod  
With deerlike foot the upland sod,  
Now from the valley sadly raise  
To crag and peak the sick man's gaze.

All things are passing. Ice by night  
Creeps o'er green fields and flow'rets bright ;  
And glittering morning sees the mead  
Wrapped in the white robe of the Dead.  
The autumn colours on the trees,  
The solemn winds that rise and swell,  
The louder voice of neighbouring seas,  
The silent birds with cow'ring wings,  
A time of change and ending tell ;  
And bid to all departing things,  
And me, among the rest, Farewell

*THE MOTHER*

I FEEL within myself a life  
That holds 'gainst death a feeble strife ;  
They say 'tis destined that the womb  
Shall be its birthplace and its tomb.  
O child ! if it be so, and thou  
Thy native world must never know,  
Thy Mother's tears will mourn the day  
When she must kiss thy Death-born face.  
But oh ! how lightly thou wilt pay  
The forfeit due from Adam's race !  
Thou wilt have lived, but not have wept,  
Have died, and yet have known no pain ;  
And sin's dark presence will have swept  
Across thy soul, yet left no stain.  
Mine is thy life ; my breath thy breath :  
I only feel the dread, the woe ;  
And in thy sickness or thy death,  
Thy Mother bears the pain, not thou.

Life nothing means for thee, but still  
It is a living thing, I feel ;  
A sex, a shape, a growth are thine,  
A form and human face divine ;  
A heart with passions wrapp'd therein,  
A nature doom'd, alas ! to sin ;  
A mind endow'd with latent fire,  
To glow, unfold, expand, aspire ;  
Some likeness from thy father caught,  
Or by remoter kindred taught ;  
Some faultiness of mind or frame,  
To wake the bitter sense of shame ;  
Some noble passions to unroll,  
The generous deed, the human tear ;  
Some feelings which thy Mother's soul  
Has pour'd on thine, while dwelling near.  
All this must past unbloom'd away  
To worlds remote from earthly day ;  
Worlds whither we by paths less brief,  
Are journeying on through joy and grief,  
And where thy Mother, now forlorn,  
May learn to know her child unborn ;  
Oh, yes ! created thing, I trust  
Thou too wilt rise with Adam's dust.

*THE CRAB TREE*

A BANK rose high above a rill,  
Whose waves through breeze-stirr'd branches  
quiver ;  
Its careless sound came up the hill  
Increasing, lessening, for ever.

Upon the bank a crab tree grew,  
All pink and white with crowds of flowers ;  
Uncounted birds, unnumbered bees,  
Took pleasure in those perfumed bowers.

And I rejoiced while this might last,  
To feed and fill mine eye and ear ;  
'Twas not a future joy, nor past,  
But I was happy then and there.

That untrain'd tree no fruit would bear  
That any hand would pluck for food;  
'Twas only bright, 'twas only fair,  
Gemming the upland solitude.

Scenes grander far I've left behind,  
Hours I have spent of nobler rank,  
But many such escape my mind,  
While memory keeps that tree and bank.

Again I turned when May came round,  
The flowers, the birds, the bees to see:  
But where I sought them, on the ground  
There lay cut down the sweet crab tree.

'Twas pity of the tree, I thought;  
Why not have spared its pleading grace?  
Some pelf its fall might bring, dear bought  
By beauty banish'd from the place.

The oak is fell'd to build a town,  
The pine a war-ship's mast to be;  
But why so carelessly cut down  
The lovely, useless, sweet crab tree?

May 8th, 1863. Paris.

*AN AUGUST EVENING*

THE lightest air that ever flew  
Unheard across the summer's blue,  
The lightest burthen bore on high,  
That e'er went wingless through the sky.  
It was a downy feather, shed  
From some bird's breast while past it fled ;  
A swallow darting on its way,  
With others and itself at play,  
Caught in mid air the floating guest,  
And bore it off to help her nest.  
That's all, there's nothing more, no moral ;  
But, reader, not for that we'll quarrel.  
'Twas something charming to the eye,  
I cannot tell the how or why ;  
But Nature is so lovely fair,  
That every hour and everywhere,  
The soul some pleasantness can gather,  
As from the swallow and the feather.

*OLD AGE*

THOU hast been wrong'd, I think, old age ;  
 Thy sovereign reign comes not in wrath,  
 Thou call'st us home from pilgrimage,  
 Spreadest the seat and clear'st the hearth.

The hopes and fears that shook our youth,  
 By thee are turn'd to certainty ;  
 I see my boy become a man,  
 I hold my girl's girl on my knee.

Whate'er of good has been, dost thou  
 In the departed past make sure ;  
 Whate'er has changed from weal to woe,  
 Thy comrade Death stands nigh to cure.

And once or twice in age there shines  
 Brief gladness, as when winter weaves  
 In frosty days o'er naked trees,  
 A sudden splendour of white leaves.

The past revives, and thoughts return,  
Which kindled once the youthful breast ;  
They light us, though no more they burn,  
Then turn to grey and are at rest.

1865.

*A RAINY DAY*

YE swallows, through this heavy day,  
That near earth's surface prey and play,  
With active wing so swift and free,  
How would ye mourn if ye should be  
Bound to perpetual rest, like me?

Ye'd break your hearts no more to follow  
Your wayward fancies through the air,  
And change at will to here and there ;  
And so should I, were I a swallow.

But I, immortal, scorn at pain,  
All things enjoyable enjoy,  
And smiling at the body's chain,  
Await till death earth's woe destroy.



Meanwhile earth's joys are freely given,  
The prayed-for gifts, content and peace,  
Come down like angel shapes from heaven ;  
Enough till prayers and wishes cease.

September 1869.

*BEATEN TO DEATH<sup>1</sup>*

At depth of night, this thought on home had shone ;  
 ‘Our distant child draws safe his sleeping breath.’  
 E’en then the cherish’d boy, th’ expected son,  
 Was dying through two hours—beaten to death.

Worse than if murder’s unavoided blow  
 Had wrench’d away, ‘twixt life and death, the bar ;  
 Worse than if battle laid their treasure low,  
 For they court death who give their sons to war !

But here, the very place which had been sought  
 To guide and foster him, his doom fulfils ;  
 The hand whose guardian Providence they bought  
 Is that, with torture still prolong’d, which kills.

<sup>1</sup> On Wednesday Mr. Thomas Hopley, described as a gentleman, was taken up on warrant by Superintendent Flanagan, before Mr. G. Darby (chairman) and Mr. R. J. Graham, at the Vestry-room, Eastbourne, on the charge of killing and slaying Reginald Channel Cancellor, late one of his school pupils, on the 21st of April last.—*Times.*

Oh God ! what agony his mother bears !

*Bear* can she not ; but groans and writhes, to think  
Of those two hours, when sleep had swathed *her* cares  
And *he* was passing o'er life's blood-stained brink.

The form she nourish'd in its infant grace,  
Wearing the white fine garment wrought by her ;  
With large eyes looking gravely in her face,  
Then breaking into laughter, gay as air ;

Hugging her neck with rapturous baby love,  
Kissing pure kisses, murmuring accents bland,  
Moving and leaping in her happy arms,  
Denting her bosom with his little hand ;

The precious frame she guarded like a shrine,  
Which in her clasp from breath of harm was safe ;  
And handled it so delicately fine,  
Lest e'en her own soft mother-hand should chafe ;

*That* is the form the ruffian slowly killed,  
The childish crying followed upon fear ;  
And next his shrieks of pain the household thrilled,  
The wounded limbs left blood upon the stair.

By midnight all was still ; oh ! was he dead !  
Or left to die?—such crime such ruffian fits.  
At morn a hireling did the first kind deed,  
Wiping the face—no longer *his* but *its*.

Mother ! thy thoughts at every turn I meet,  
And while I write, the tears run down like rain ;  
Grief thou might'st bear thyself, but how submit,  
When 'tis thy son, not thou, who bears the pain ?

At thy home-table, thy home-couch upon  
Breathing, in wealth and shelter, healthy breath,  
Still wilt thou writhe, that thy expected son,  
Was dying through two hours—beaten to death

*THE FIRST MORNING OF 1860<sup>1</sup>*

ONE evening 'mid the summer flown  
 Has stamp'd my memory more than any ;  
 It pass'd us by among the many,  
 And yet it stands there, all alone.

We sate without our open'd room,  
 While fell the eve's transparent shade ;  
 The out-door world, all warmth and bloom,  
 To us a summer parlour made.

The garden's cultivated grace,  
 The luxury of neatness round,  
 The careless amplitude of space,  
 The fountain with perpetual sound,

Told of a state through many years  
 Serenely safe in doing well ;  
 And while we sate, there struck our ears  
 The summons of the evening bell.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from the *Cornhill Magazine*, No. 1.

It call'd to food, it call'd to rest,  
The many whom the rich man's dome  
Had gather'd in its ample breast,  
To them and him alike a home.

That very hour, was thund'ring o'er  
A neighbouring land the tramp of War  
Which stalk'd along the lovely shore,  
Its shapes to blast, its sounds to mar.

The pang my bosom rudely beat,  
What if that fate our own had been?  
What if or victory or defeat  
Had wrapp'd us in its woe and sin?

What if it still our fate should be?  
And the safe hours, enjoy'd like this,  
Amid our home-scenes safe and free  
Should be the passing year of bliss?

The new one on the lectern lies,  
Its leaves the turning hand await ;  
Those fresh unopen'd leaves comprise  
Th' unread, but written words of Fate.



O God! what are they? if they be  
The bloody words of ruffian war,  
Grant us success!—but rather far  
Avert the scourge of victory!

Too dear the price! Ah! human forms  
Of guardian husbands, precious sons  
Once children, hid from smallest harms  
Of mind and body, cherish'd ones!

Shall ye stand up, the gallant mark  
Of the brute shot and iron rod,  
And man's frame, exquisite in work,  
Be treated like earth's common clod?

Shall England's polish'd glory, pure  
In freedom, wisdom, high estate,  
Her open Bible, and her poor  
Becoming one with rich and great,—

Shall these high things be but the aim  
Of envious men in rough affray,  
To try against the noble frame  
Their brutal skill to rob and slay?

Forbid it, Thou, who to the strong  
And wise hast might and counsel lent ;  
And lead'st them danger's path along,  
Audacious, firm, and confident.

Forbid it, Thou, who to the weak  
Permittest to be strong in pray'r ;  
From Whom we wives and mothers seek  
Peace to endow the new-born year.

*EPITAPH FOR A YOUNG LADY<sup>1</sup>*

YOUTH, beauty, love, a mother's joy divine,  
A wife's, a daughter's blessings, all were thine ;  
These didst thou change for heaven's immortal breath,  
After a short unconscious strife with death.  
How blest !—O mourners o'er her funeral urn,—  
(And hearts that suffer cannot choose but mourn),  
Seek not to call your anguish ease, as they  
Who strive with words to drive their grief away ;  
But be ye patient, humble, sad, as One  
Of an immortal God the mortal Son,  
Who weeps man's solemn hour of storm and gloom,  
But sees the daylight dawn beyond the tomb.

September 1871.

<sup>1</sup> The young Duchess of St. Albans.

*SEASONS*

SPRING comes and goes with sunlit showers,  
Brown tints, and buds enclosing flowers,  
Birds who for love contrive the nest,  
And broods who love the sheltering breast,  
Trees which have felt their sap-stirred roots  
Unfolding leaves, preparing fruits—  
For life in its mysterious phase  
Pervades the ever-lengthening days,  
Enkindling nature far and wide,  
A scene where nothing yet has died.

Next, summer reigns ; with wealth of leaves  
A robe of unstained green it weaves,  
Clear brooks reveal their stony bed  
Which lift o'er broken waves the head ;  
Warm breezes flatter as they pass  
Scent-loaded from the new-mown grass,



And upland, wood, and breezy plain  
A summer-parlour make for men.

Then autumn days the season bless,  
And life and death in splendour dress ;  
They paint the fruit with yellow gold,  
The corn in amber waves is rolled,  
Bright scarlet clothes the poppy's head,  
The red rose wears intenser red ;  
And the same gold and crimson lie  
On leaves that are about to die.  
Blue mists arise, and pass away  
As warms the sky to middle day,  
And on the evening's coloured breast  
The mountain's marble outlines rest,  
While cold intruding on the year  
Just crisps the sunset atmosphere.

Then winter enters, and restores  
With home-made heat the chamber hours ;  
All day the burning logs expire,  
And loose the spirit forth of fire ;  
All night the lamp with shades at strife  
Gives us the gayest hours of life—

Friends seek us—summer's work is done—  
Strong winter-sport comes boldly on,  
And books and play and earth's brief rest  
Make present winter best of best.

One season more is coming still,  
Which its own pleasures doubtless fill.  
The grave extends its tranquil couch,  
Where care has often longed to crouch,  
And age lies down relieved, and sighs  
‘At last I need no more arise.’  
Or else perchance in that new home  
To which thro’ unknown paths we come,  
The grave will loose with potent spells  
Its dwellers’ fleshy manacles,  
And leave his unencumbered will  
A spirit with man’s wishes still.  
At times when words have made me sigh  
That told of torrent, city, sky,  
Where freer feet than mine might trace  
Each lonely and each peopled place,  
I’ve pondered thus :—I soon shall lie  
In the green earth with those that die;

And leaving clay with clay, the soul  
Will be alone, my being's whole.  
The soul it is which longs to flee  
O'er mountain white and icy sea,  
To glide behind the falling veil  
Of torrents leaping to the dale ;  
To see the hours and spots where rise  
Such glories of the earth and skies  
As grace each day the solitude  
Of alpine height, or dawn-touched flood,  
And rarely in his earthly span  
Greet the delighted eye of man.  
This cannot be while wear I must  
My injured garb of mortal dust ;  
The strong of limb, the fleet, the free,  
May see them, but I may not see.  
No matter—there is time to come  
Beyond, as now before, the tomb,  
When cumbering flesh no more can stay  
Mind on its unobstructed way.  
And as these thoughts their image gain  
Within the mirror of my brain,  
I smother the superfluous sigh  
And say—I'll go there when I die.

*THE SILVER WEDDING*

DEAR love, we have been mine and thine  
For five-and-twenty silver years,  
The silver day begins to shine  
November's tenth day reappears.

How much of good, how little ill  
Has lit our smile or bent our brow,  
Oh ! may the God who gave, give still  
A future like our blessed now.

Before us in the lengthened scene  
Stands out the wedding day of Gold,  
But crossing all the plain between  
There lies a chasm deep and cold.

Beneath its sod, its shades within,  
Shall thou and I lie buried deep,  
If we together enter in  
How calm the step, how sweet the sleep.

And firm my faith that past that strand  
The same bright prospect will be given,  
And we together, hand in hand,  
Shall keep our Golden day in Heaven.

November 10th, 1865.

*LINES TO CLARIBEL—WRITTEN AFTER  
A FIRST INTERVIEW.*

PERHAPS I shall never see thee more,  
One hour ago, the last,  
I had not seen, I was to see,  
And now, and now—'tis past.

I thought, Is she the thing I dreamt ?  
What presence does she wear ?  
I've seen thy face, I've heard thy voice,  
Ah dreams, how weak ye were.

I've heard the voice that entered in  
The heart's most holy place,  
Saw the white hand creating sound  
Reflected in her face.

I felt her soul touched with the charm  
Of beauty, which it found  
In every least and greatest thing  
That nature spreads around.



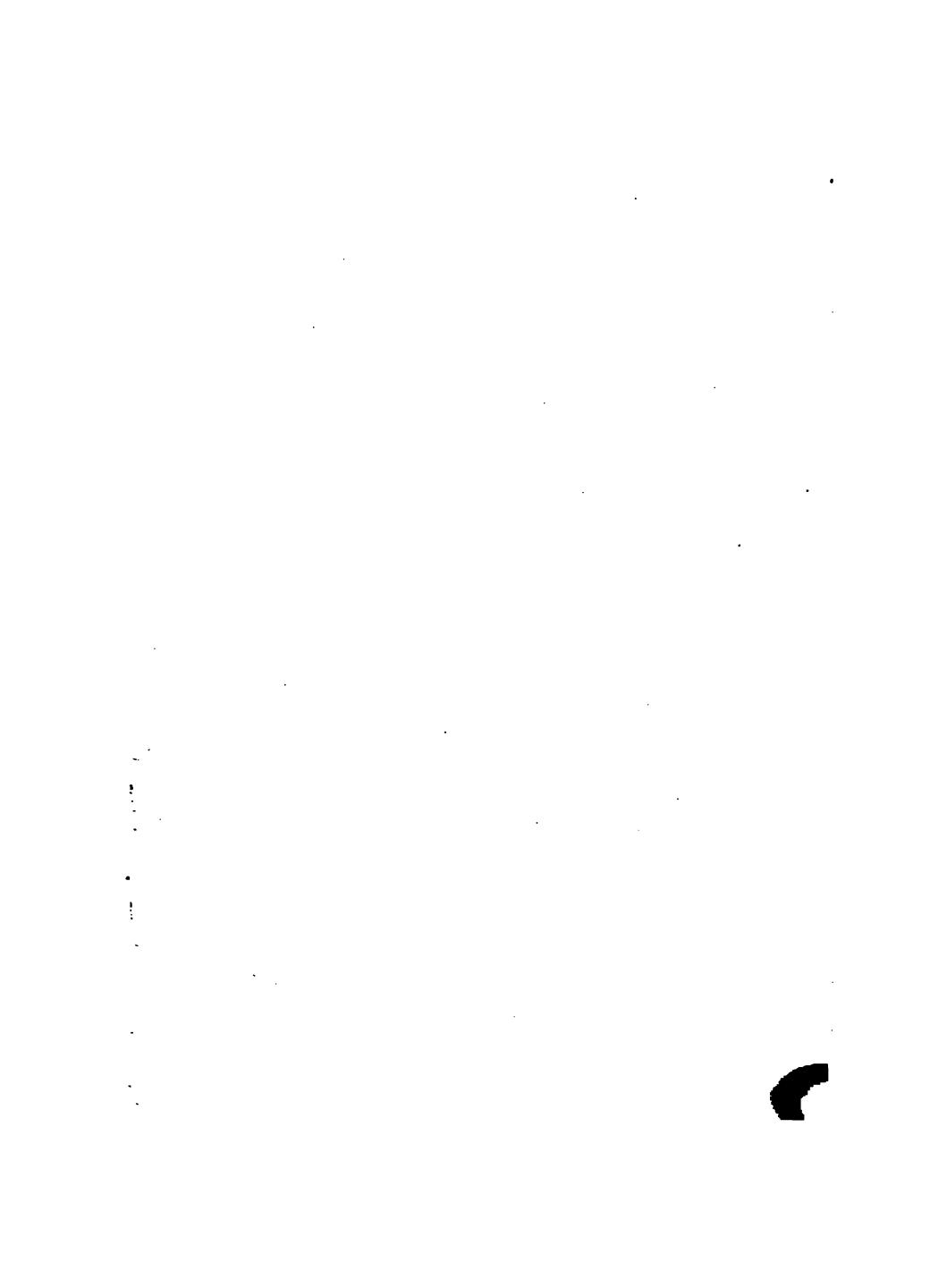
She came and passed, and there is now  
A blank, a silence, where  
That gracious presence filled the scene  
So spirit-full and fair.

Once in Italian skies I saw  
A pile of glory reared,  
Shapes, hues, beyond belief of man,  
And then it disappeared.

Not so, not so, O Lady dear,  
Do thou my path forsake ;  
List the recalling spell I weave,  
For Mind and Music's sake.

July 7th, 1868.

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